the weekly Standard

AUGUST 17 / AUGUST 24, 2009

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JONATHAN V. LAST

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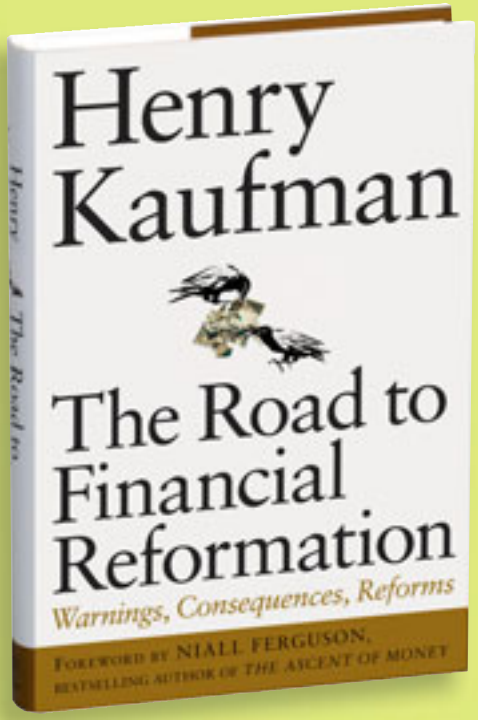

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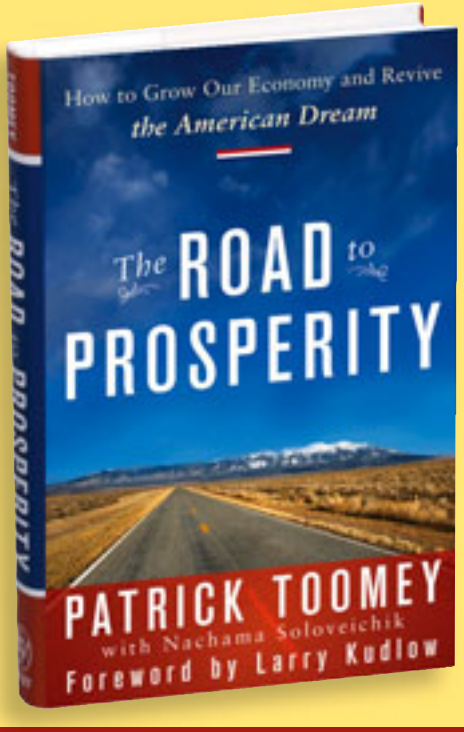

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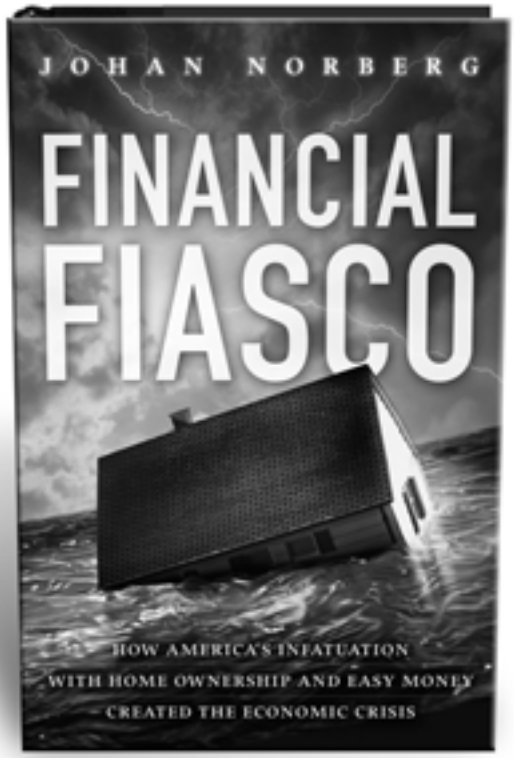

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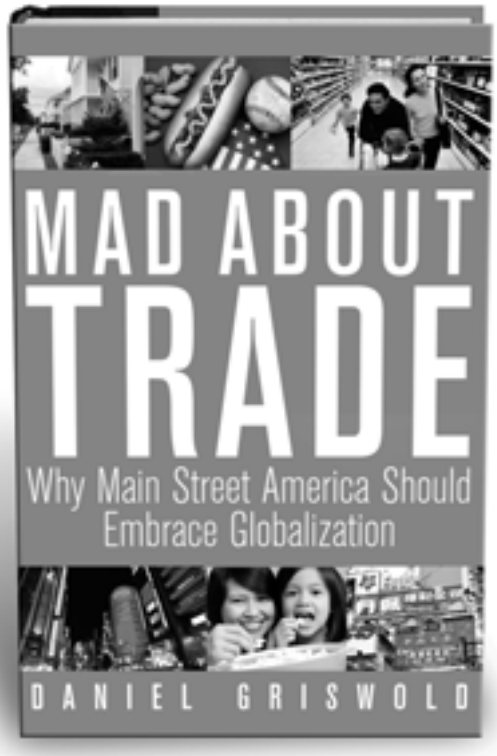

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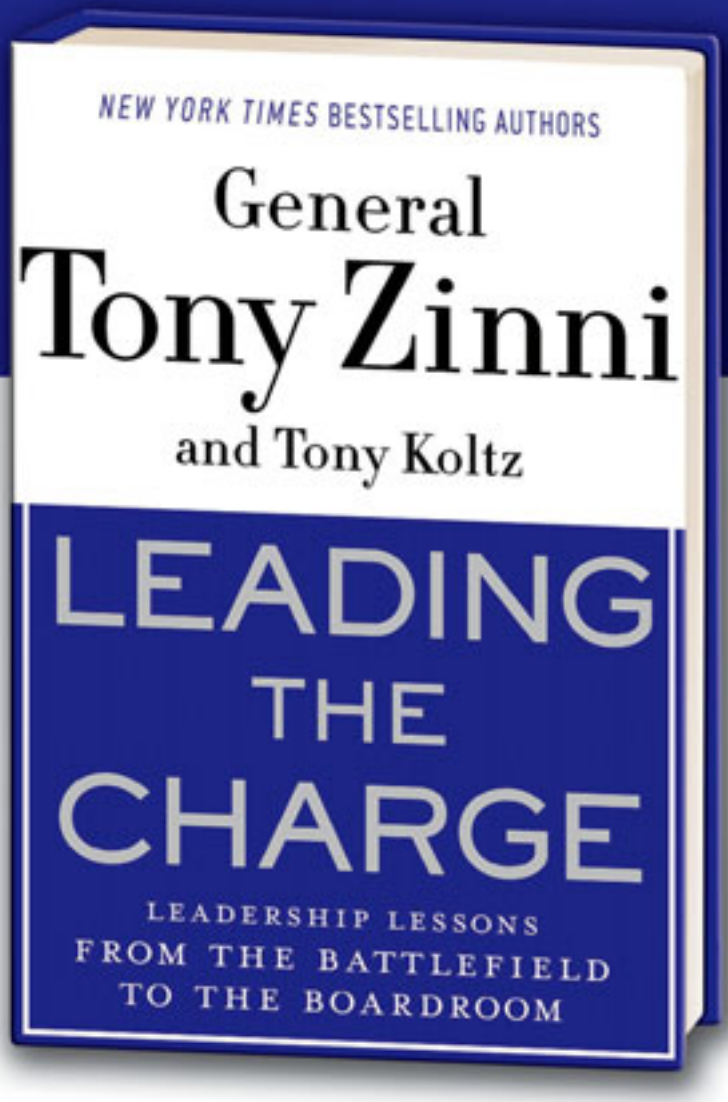

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THIS IS A COMBINED ISSUE. THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE WEEKLY STANDARD WILL APPEAR IN TWO WEEKS.

Contents

August 17 / August 24, 2009 • Volume 14, Number 45

2 Scrapbook ..... *Obama vs. the 'Outside Agitators'*

4 Casual ..... *Mary Katharine Ham, beyond the pale*

5 Editorial ..... *Real Health Reform*

Articles

7 Tweeting While Iran Burns *How many divisions does Twitter have?* ..... BY JONATHAN V. LAST

10 Don't Go There *Martha's Vineyard is not the best presidential vacation site* ..... BY NOEMIE EMERY

11 The Untimely Demise of the F-22 *A triumph for the military-industrial complex* ..... BY MICHAEL GOLDFARB

13 A War Grows in Afghanistan *Does Obama have the courage to win it?* ..... BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Cover: G.K. Chesterton by Mark Summers

Features

16 The Zubaydah Dossier ..... BY THOMAS JOSCELYN
Assertions that the terrorist wasn't a central figure in al Qaeda's inner circle are ludicrous.

Books & Arts

22 Peace, It's Wonderful *But winning it is hard work* ..... BY GARY SCHMITT

27 Jazz by the Book *Up the river from New Orleans, and into the concert halls* ..... BY TED GIOIA

29 Picture Perfect *The first Grand Tour with color film in the cameras* ..... BY JAMES F.X. O'GARA

30 The Golden Door *Ground zero in the 'third wave' of immigration* ..... BY JAMES M. BANNER JR.

33 Right Stuff *What does it mean to be an American conservative?* ..... BY STEVEN F. HAYWARD

35 Fighting Quaker *Would independence have been won without Nathanael Greene?* ..... BY EDWARD ACHORN

36 Darkness Visible *Stories that plumb below the surface* ..... BY ANDREW PALMER

37 Global Warning *The horror at the heart of Al Gore's utopia* ..... BY JON L. BREEN

39 On Becoming G.K. *The invention of Chesterton was a complicated process* ..... BY JOHN C. CHALBERG

40 Who Was She? *In search of the aunt who was locked away forever* ..... BY DIANE SCHARPER

41 Bluegrass Fever *Music to accompany despairs of the heart* ..... BY EDITH ALSTON

43 May We Recommend *Four books that captured our attention* ..... BY PHILIP TERZIAN

44 Parody ..... *Bill Clinton meets the Dear Leader*

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Obama vs. the 'Outside Agitators'

Readers may have noticed that, during the past seven or eight months, the tradition of honorable dissent in American political life seems to have become dishonorable.

Disagreement with the administration is no longer the Higher Patriotism but the Lower Patriotism—a form of opportunism dressed up as hypocrisy. Indeed, criticism of the president is no longer a healthy symptom of democracy but an irresponsible (some would argue treasonous) act of political sedition. Right-thinking people agree: We have only one president at a time, and his success is the country's success; his failure is the fault of embittered partisans.

If readers detect a smidgen of cynicism in The Scrapbook's attitude here, there's good reason. This sea change in principles seems to have coincided with the election and inauguration of Barack Obama as president. Whereas it was once lively and brave and culturally imperative to depict George W. Bush as Hitler, complete with swastikas and squared-off moustache, or cast aspersions on the character, intelligence, morals, and family life of Bush or Dick Cheney or Karl Rove, it appears to be something approaching a hate crime to depict President Obama in anything less than hagiographical mode.

Which is why The Scrapbook is enjoying itself so much these days. As the various Obama initiatives—socialized medicine, "stimulus" spending, cap-and-trade—grow less and less popular with the voting populace, yesterday's bulging-vein, red-in-the-face Bush-haters are discovering that public discontent manifests itself today in old-fashioned, tried-and-true, rough-and-tumble methods: booing congressmen at town meetings and shouting down weaselly answers, holding up signs in front of television cameras, marching in protest—even criticizing President Obama on the Internet!

And yet, instead of celebrating these tributes to the dissenting spirit of the antiwar movement of the 1960s or acts of civil disobedience for civil rights, the left has chosen to react like Uncle Harry when his son came home from college wearing a beard. Here is the communications director of the Democratic National Committee, Brad Woodhouse:

Sebelius and Specter confront the rabid mob.

> Republicans . . . are inciting angry mobs of a small number of rabid right wing extremists funded by K Street lobbyists to disrupt thoughtful discussions about the future of health care in America.

And here is the *Washington Post*'s designated socialist op-ed columnist, Harold Meyerson:

> [R]ight-wing Republicans stormed a number of . . . meetings across the country, shouting down members of the House and, in Philadelphia, Sen. Arlen Specter and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. In Austin, protesters blocked Democratic Rep. Lloyd Doggett's car and made it impossible for him to talk to constituents about such matters as appointments to military academies.

Sounds more like Aunt Harriet than Red Harold. Yes, not only did "rabid" protestors "shout down" Sen. Arlen Specter, and "disrupt thoughtful discussions about the future of health care," they were following the orders of unnamed "K Street lobbyists" and other outside agitators, and preventing Lloyd Doggett from talking about West Point! Somehow, Obama's supporters—you might call them the silent majority—just aren't able to cut through all the noise.

Readers may ask, where have we heard this before? Well, turn the clock back a few revolutions, and the voice of Richard M. Nixon may be heard, complaining about the decibel level of protestors and pleading for a national conversation.

> In these difficult years, America has suffered from a fever of words; from inflated rhetoric that promises more than it can deliver; from angry rhetoric that fans discontents into hatreds; from bombastic rhetoric that postures instead of persuading.
>
> We cannot learn from one another until we stop shouting at one another—until we speak quietly enough so that our words can be heard as well as our voices.

That, of course, was from Nixon's first Inaugural Address (1969)—and if we may say so, the communications director of the Democratic National Committee, Brad Woodhouse, couldn't have said it better. ♦

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Appeasing North Korea

THE SCRAPBOOK is not a reflexive partisan. We were appalled to see Bill Clinton in Pyongyang last week making a deal of some sort for the release of the two American hostages being held by the North Korean regime. But appeasement of the Kim family dictatorship has, sadly, been U.S. policy through several administrations now. We were equally appalled when the Bush administration's point man on Korea, Ambassador Christopher Hill, reacted to criticism of North Korea's abominable human rights violations with this jaw-dropping bit of moral equivalency: "Each country, including our own, needs to improve its human rights record."

Frankly, what our own country really needs to improve is its diplomatic backbone. Our contributing editor Max Boot made the point well at *Commentary* magazine's Contentions blog:

"In 1847, David Pacifico, a Jew who had been born in British-held Gibraltar and was therefore a British subject, had his house burned down in Athens by an anti-Semitic mob. The Greek government refused to protect him or provide any restitution. Lord Palmerston, Britain's foreign secretary, sent the Royal Navy to blockade Greece until it paid Pacifico's demands.

"Critics charged that Palmerston was overreacting. The House of Lords even voted to censure him. But in the House of Commons, Palmerston carried the day with a magnificent five-hour oration in which he declared: 'As the Roman, in days of old, held himself free from indignity, when he could say, *Civis Romanus sum* [I am a Roman citizen], so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England will protect him from injustice and wrong.'

"Theodore Roosevelt struck a similar tone in 1904 after Ion Perdicaris, a Greek-American living in Morocco, was kidnapped by the bandit chief Ahmed al-Raisuli. His Secretary of State John Hay drove the 1904 Republican Convention into a frenzy of approbation when he made it known that an American naval squadron had been sent to Morocco to demand 'Perdicaris alive or Raisuli dead.' (It later turned out that Perdicaris was no longer an American citizen, but that was a mere detail compared to the principle Roosevelt espoused.)

"I recount these tidbits of ancient history to show how far we have come over the past century—in the wrong direction. Today the United States is the mightiest nation in the world—far stronger than Britain was in its 19th-century heyday or than we ourselves were in 1904. Yet what happens today to those who dare take our citizens hostage? Umm, pretty much nothing. . . .

"Granted, there are good reasons not to launch a war against North Korea or Iran [now holding three U.S. backpackers hostage]. North Korea, after all, has something that the Moroccans and Greeks didn't—nuclear weapons. Still, it's an outrage that there isn't more outrage, either in the U.S. government or the country at large, over the fate of our fellow citizens who are held hostage by thugs. We could use a '*Civis Americanus sum*' doctrine today." ♦

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Casual

Little Miss Sunscreen

I am a reapplier. If one were to do the math, one would likely find that, all told, I lost an entire summer of my youth reapplying my sunscreen while my friends were playing Marco Polo.

I was that child for whom a day trip to a water park was not a wondrous adventure of towering, consequence-free thrill rides, but a devil's bargain to be paid, in full, with three days on the couch, clutching a bottle of aloe vera, like a little sunburnt sot.

I consider myself lucky to have grown up shortly before the time when a pigmentally challenged child like me might have been overprotected into chess competitions and spelling bees for fear of a distant cancer threat. My parents were sensible about the dangers, kept me slathered as best they could in SPF 45, and let me do my thing—field days, soccer, softball, and capture the flag. In my neighborhood, being pasty, skinny, and conspicuously buck-toothed was quite enough to deal with without being relegated to permanent "indoor kid" status while my classmates double-dutched their way through childhood.

I felt twinges of jealousy each summer as my friends got sun-kissed and freckled while I got sun-smacked and fried. My best friend was half-Mexican and half-Italian, a combination that can best be described as . . . impossibly exotic golden-bronze goddess. Lucky her. Her watch would leave a light mark on her increasingly golden wrist within minutes of the pool's opening weekend. I countered with the perfect crimson outline of three errant fingertips on my shoulder, incurred during an imperfect reapplication. I could not compete.

In elementary school, the problem was simply a practical one in need of a practical solution: How could I maximize my time outside with my more UV-resistant brothers, classmates, and friends? I found a balance, thanks to Coppertone.

Later, I learned my peaked pallor was not just a condition I had to deal with, but something that could affect others and their ability to preserve junior-high memories. The Olan Mills man lived in mortal fear of me. As one of the few white kids at a majority black school for all of my childhood—and, at points, the only white kid on several sports teams—I was the bane of his darkroom existence. In the days before Photoshop could Curve-tool me into the land of the living in post-production, photographers lit the room to accommodate my teammates. The inevitable result was that I, your lowly shooting guard, burst forth from every photo with the white-hot power of a supernova. You can almost see my teammates squinting in the glare.

MATT COLLINS

It was around the same time that I first purchased makeup. I approached the Clinique counter innocently enough, perusing the rows of elegantly named foundations—Ivory, Alabaster, Sand. When the saleswoman put me through the skin-matching motions, I wondered what my color would be. What was the market-approved, poetic name meant to convince me of the unique beauty of my skin? Honey-milk? Porcelain? As it turns out, I am Clinique foundation No. 01, which is elegantly named "Pale." My demographic is apparently so small and inescapably ashen they didn't feel the need to bother with a euphemism for us.

Growing up in the South, where it is a hallmark of feminine beauty to be both preternaturally and permanently tan, the bottle might as well have read, "Not Prom Queen," "Band Nerd," or "Science Fair Blue Ribbon," all of which would have described me with equal accuracy and more creativity.

There were occasions when, through a combination of carelessness and copious outdoor competition, I managed to cross the skin-damage Rubicon, emerging at least jaundiced, if not downright tan. I have saved three pictures from 1999 as a testament, and a reminder that it's probably not worth it.

After all, tanning beds were just this week upgraded to the highest group of cancer risks (surprise!) by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, moved from "probably carcinogenic" to on par with cigarettes and radioiodines. The announcement undoubtedly sent an army of Hill staffers to search the capital's CVS stores for just the right bronzer for their candidates.

I once spent several 10-minute visits inside the lemon-sweat scented confines of a tanning bed to rid myself of a heinous triangular sports-bra tan in preparation for a backless prom dress. It did not work. I will never get those minutes back.

I had come to terms with my paleness long ago, but it's nice to see that there's a bit of a wan renaissance going on to encourage young women who have come after me. Such starlets as Rachel McAdams, Christina Hendricks, and Scarlett Johansson are all considered sexy despite their decidedly unsunny complexions.

When it comes to getting a tan, my advice is: If at first you don't succeed, just give up and reapply. You'll be glad you did.

Mary Katharine Ham

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the weekly Standard

Real Health Reform

This has been a most unhappy summer for liberal health care reformers. As recently as May, Senate Finance Committee chairman Max Baucus could exclaim to the *Washington Post*, "The train is leaving the station. There's a sense of inevitability here." Yet as members of Congress begin their August recess, that train seems to have run off its rails, and the health care overhaul envisioned by President Obama and congressional Democrats is in real jeopardy.

Public concerns about the cost of the Democrats' proposal, its effects on the quality and availability of care, the disruption of coverage for the happily insured, and the prospects of ballooning bureaucracy each contributed to this turnabout. But it was the combination of them all—arising from the immense ambition of the plan as a whole—that has truly threatened to undo the effort.

In this sense, today's Democrats have repeated a crucial error of the Clinton health care initiative of 1993-94: They have tried to take on the entire massive and complex American health care system at once, rather than pursuing discrete solutions to particular problems in manageable steps. This is not an incidental feature of the liberal approach to health care reform. It is a function of the left's deeply held view that reform must involve wholesale reinvention from scratch, so that every last detail can be subjected to rational control and centralized expertise.

Inevitably, the result is a project too large, too complicated, too expensive, and too disruptive to succeed. And the public knows it. Polls show voters think Obama is taking on too much, and because this massive effort comes in the midst of the worst economic downturn in a generation, voters have the added sense that the Democrats' focus on health care distracts from attending to economic growth and recovery. The public has turned against Obamacare in strikingly large numbers—far worse than those Hillarycare faced at this stage in the Clinton effort.

For Republicans, this presents an opportunity to avert a sharp leftward turn in health care policy, and perhaps even to advance some market-oriented reform ideas. To do so, they must highlight not only the many flaws of Obamacare, but the overall flaw: the error of taking on too much at once.

The Democrats' proposal is a project too large, too complicated, too expensive, and too disruptive to succeed. And the public knows it. Polls show voters think Obama is taking on too much.

JASON SEILER

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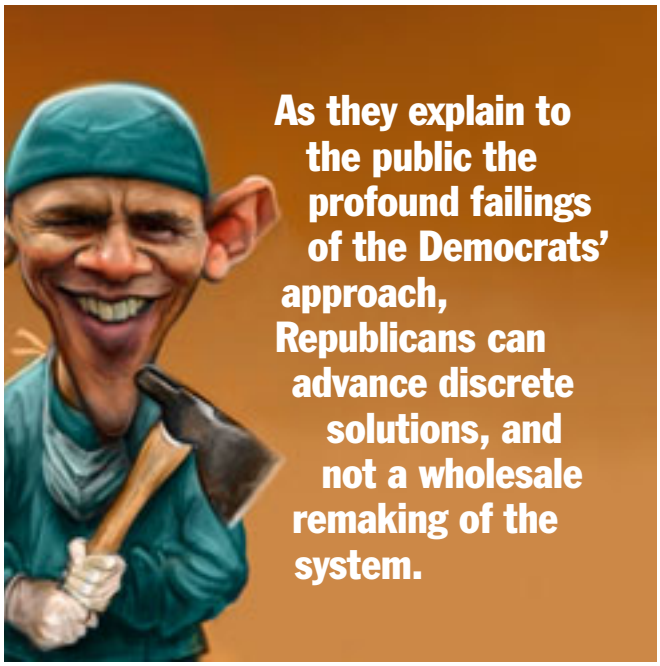
As they talk to constituents this month and prepare for the resumption of the legislative struggle in the fall, Republicans should stress the excessive ambition of the Democrats' effort—aimed as much at transforming the relationship between the American people and their government as at solving actual problems of health care financing—and should highlight their own more practical, affordable proposals, which need not be undertaken as a single massive transformation in a single bill too long for anyone to read.

For most Americans, the shortfalls of our health care system express themselves in high costs (leading to the high number of uninsured), the instability of health coverage tied to employment, and the long-term fiscal nightmare of our Medicare and Medicaid entitlements.

To begin to address costs, conservatives should stress some ways of combating the inefficiencies of the current system. Ending the tax penalty for purchasing health coverage outside the employer system would help build a genuine individual market in health insurance and encourage the informed consumer choices and provider competition essential to reining in costs. The Democrats are increasingly open to taxing employer health benefits to pay for their massive new entitlement. Republican reformers should instead propose to extend the benefit to everyone in the form of a refundable tax credit for individuals to enable the creation of a true private health insurance market.



To further encourage competition, Republicans should call for reforms of insurance regulation to allow for the sale of coverage across state lines, and to allow small businesses to join together in negotiating coverage for their workers. And they should make a forthright case for medical liability reform, to lower costs and free doctors from the burdens of defensive medicine. The Democrats, out of deference to trial lawyers, have entirely avoided such reforms.

Meanwhile, to encourage greater stability and portability of coverage, Republicans should champion a federal-state partnership to create health insurance marketplaces—large risk pools that would act as aggregators of options for consumers and of buyers for insurers but would not impose burdensome new regulations. This would make it easier for individuals to buy coverage, and such coverage (whether paid for through an employer or directly) would belong to the consumer and stay with him if he changed jobs or lost his job. Federal dollars could also support expanded high-risk pools in these marketplaces to allow those with preexisting conditions to purchase coverage like everyone else.

Such reforms could address much of the problem of the uninsured without the need for the immense public infrastructure of Obamacare, and at a much lower cost. And each piece would constitute a useful reform on its own.

As they explain to the public the profound failings of the Democrats' approach to reforming American health care, Republicans can advance ideas like these: discrete solutions to particular problems, and not a wholesale remaking of the system. These ideas are not simple—each would have its complications, as the problems to be solved are quite complex; but they are simpler than a wholesale overhaul of health care. They are not without their costs, but they are nowhere near as expensive as what the president and Congress are contemplating. Such ideas build on the strengths of American health care to address its weaknesses and problems, rather than tearing down a system most Americans are happy with and starting over.

Two centuries ago, the great conservative reformer Edmund Burke offered a lesson, drawn from an analogy to medicine, that today's conservatives would do well to learn: Reform properly understood, he wrote, is "a direct application of a remedy to the grievance complained of." In the midst of an economic crisis that has already occasioned several hastily improvised, massively ambitious extensions of government into the economy, it is time to think not about transforming America on the model of Europe, but about solving particular problems (caused in no small part by government policy) with particular reforms that encourage competition, innovation, and freedom.

—*Yuval Levin*

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Tweeting While Tehran Burns

How many divisions does Twitter have?

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

THOMAS FLUHARTY

Looking back on it, it's hard to understand how the recent Iranian revolution failed. Sure, the mullahs had guns, tanks, an air force, police, the Revolutionary Guard, the Basij, and imported terrorist thugs on their side. But the Iranian protestors had Twitter. Who could have predicted that an authoritarian regime, in control of its military and willing to spill blood, would triumph over the power of social networking?

It is no criticism of the Iranian dissidents to note that in the West there was a wave of absurd, and disquieting, Twitter triumphalism connected with Iran's June post-election protests. And the praise of Twitter was, like Twitter itself, more about narcissism than sympathy with Iran.

The TED project is the propagator of a much-hyped annual, invitation-only technology conference on "ideas worth spreading"—so imagine a club formed by Tony Robbins and Steve Jobs. As the protests began, TED's website ran an interview with NYU new media professor Clay Shirky who proclaimed, "[T]his is it. The big one." The Iranian protests were, Shirky said, "the first revolution that has been catapulted onto a global stage and transformed by social media." And because of Twitter, "people throughout the world are not only listening but responding. They're engaging with individual participants."

Like all good techno-futurists, Shirky framed his praise of Twitter with an attack on old media. "Traditional media operates as a source of information not as a means of coordination," he explained.

> It can't do more than make us sympathize. Twitter makes us empathize. . . . Someone tweeted from Tehran today that "the American media may not care, but the American people do." That's a sea-change.

Shirky was wrong, of course, about

Jonathan V. Last is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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the American media. They cared quite a lot. The *Atlantic* blogger Marc Ambinder—he's the new media's E.J. Dionne—was on the case immediately. In a post titled "The Revolution Will Be Twittered," he announced that, "when histories of the Iranian election are written, Twitter will doubtless be cast as a protagonal technology that enabled the powerless to survive a brutal crackdown and information blackout by the ruling authorities."

Ambinder's "protagonal" (it means whatever you want it to) *Atlantic* colleague Andrew Sullivan was less circumspect. In one of Sullivan's many posts on the subject—also titled "The Revolution Will Be Twittered"—he wrote of Twitter:

> That a new information technology could be improvised for this purpose so swiftly is a sign of the times. It reveals in Iran what the Obama campaign revealed in the United States. You cannot stop people any longer. You cannot control them any longer. They can bypass your established media; they can broadcast to one another; they can organize as never before. . . .
>
> The key force behind this is the next generation, the Millennials, who elected Obama in America and may oust Ahmadinejad in Iran. They want freedom; they are sick of lies; they enjoy life and know hope.
>
> This generation will determine if the world can avoid the apocalypse that will come if the fear-ridden establishments continue to dominate global politics, motivated by terror, armed with nukes, and playing old but now far too dangerous games.

On NPR, the *Wall Street Journal*'s Yochi Dreazen explained that "this [revolution] would not happen without Twitter." TechPresident's Nancy Scola speculated that "It's looking possible we'll look back at the last days' events in Iran and see the start of Web 3.0—on-the-ground historic change through social media." In the *Christian Science Monitor,* Mark Pfeifle suggested—seriously—that Twitter be given the Nobel Peace Prize. "[T]hink about what Twitter has accomplished," he argued.

> It has empowered people to attempt to resolve a domestic showdown with international implications—and has enabled the world to stand with them. It laid the foundation to pressure the world to denounce oppression in Iran. . . . 140 characters were enough to shine a light on Iranian oppression and elevate Twitter to the level of change agent.

Carried away by all the media talk, a starry-eyed Gordon Brown announced that because of Twitter, "You cannot have Rwanda again."

And just what does Twitter do that it should be ascribed such powers? First, it is called the essential organizing tool, helping the dissidents plan rallies and protests. It's unclear exactly how important a part Twitter played on this score, but there is at least anecdotal evidence to support the claim. Second, Twitter was credited with having spread first-person accounts of the uprising as it unfolded. Here, too, the extent of its success is unclear. Yes, there were hundreds of thousands of "tweets" claiming to be firsthand reports from Tehran. But because the service is anonymous it's impossible for anyone to know which reports were genuine and which were not. As one skeptic joked, "On the Internet, no one knows your revolution is a dog."

Not that it really matters, mind you, because Twitter's signal accomplishment was how it made outsiders *feel*. Nancy Scola helpfully explained that with Web 2.0, "the [Internet] ethos evolved into *do something*. We developed an expectation that we could, using our new tools, blur the line between observers and participants." As examples of participation, Scola noted that many Western Twitterers were changing their "default" locations to Tehran. Or, even better,

> [S]ome are making a bid at solidarity with protesting Iranians by turning their Twitter and other online icons green, as green is both a color with significance and Islam [sic] and was a symbol adopted by protestors in the early going.

Shirky concurred. "Reading personal messages from individuals on the ground prompts a whole other sense of involvement," he noted. "We're seeing everyone desperate to do something to show solidarity, like wear green." Andrew Sullivan showed all sorts of solidarity. "Technology has not just made the world more dangerous; it has also enabled freedom to keep one small step in front of tyranny and lies," he wrote pugnaciously. "One thing you can do is use Twitter to fight the regime yourself. Help bring these fascist bastards down at the end of your modem." Sullivan did his part by turning the logo on his blog from blue to green. Improbably, Ahmadinejad and the mullahs weathered the storm.

This wasn't the first time Web 2.0 proselytizers had tried to give the Internet credit for changing the world. Last December anarchist students in Greece rioted in vague opposition to the police, banking system, unemployment, the government, and what have you. Some of the rioters Twittered the outbursts using the tag "griots." The *Economist* rushed to give Twitter credit for creating "networked protests" with the power to change the status quo. A few weeks later the riots abated, and Greece went back to its semi-civilized state of perpetual strikes and random demonstrations.

In April there was another attempt to coin a Twitter revolution, this time in Moldova. Communist president Vladimir Voronin had recently won a suspicious election. Students planned to demonstrate in the capital's main square, expecting about 1,000 participants. Ten thousand protestors showed up, sparking days of unrest which some believed would lead to the fall of the regime. *Wired* called it the "Twitter Revolution," as did *Foreign Policy* blogger Evgeny Morozov, who asked, "Will we remember the events that are now unfolding in Chisinau not by the color of the flags but by the social-networking technology used?" The next day the *New York Times* was suckered into running its own story about the "Twitter Revolution."

Only, there was no revolution, and it wasn't clear that Twitter played much of a role in the unrest. Only 70 Twitter users actually listed their locations

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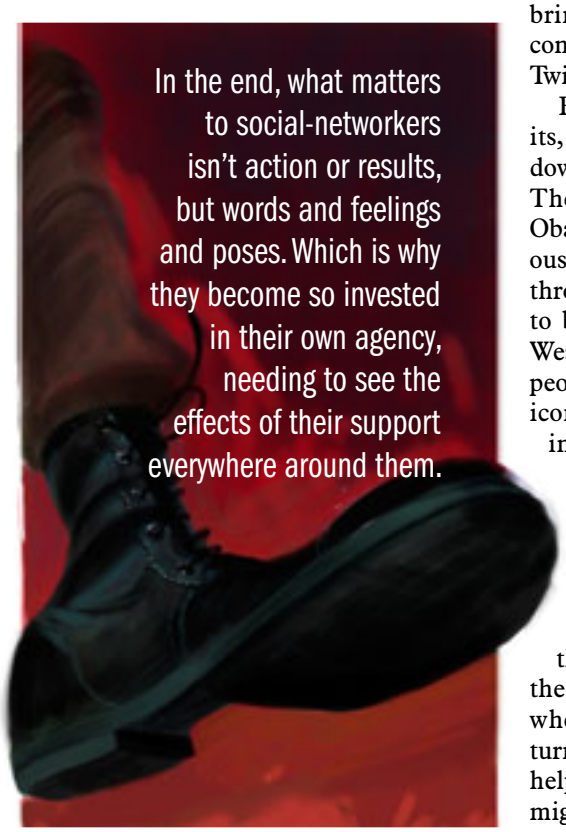
as being in Moldova. (Though in theory, some Moldovans could have used fake locations to hide their identities.) Demonstrators who did use Twitter later explained that the service was only peripherally helpful and that they had relied on a host of online websites, services, and message boards. Also, it later became clear that large numbers of the demonstrators were actually plants from the government's security service, there to act violently in an attempt to tarnish the demonstrators. And in any case, the revolution never progressed beyond a few days of demonstrations, which quickly petered out.

Yet three months later, Moldova held a follow-up election after the parliament was dissolved. This time the vote was fair and relatively calm. The Communists lost and were ousted with little fanfare and fewer tweets. The *New York Times*'s Twitter revolution story was 1,300 words. The actual fall of the Communists got a grudging 650-word summary. Is it a revolution if no one twitters?

The desire to find some—any—real-world usefulness for social networking persists. This month's *Wired* carries a story about the State Department bringing a cadre of Internet titans to Iraq to help rebuild the country. Twitter cofounder Jack Dorsey went on the trip, as did Scott Heiferman, CEO of Meetup, the "revolutionary" web-organizing tool that helped Howard Dean carry one state (his home of Vermont) during his ballyhooed 2004 presidential bid. Google sent a pair of reps, along with an executive from YouTube.

The mission was the brainchild of 27-year-old Jared Cohen, a State Department boy-wonder who was profiled by the *New Yorker* at age 25 when he first came to work for Condoleezza Rice. (Politically transcendent, he has continued to blossom under Hillary Clinton.) "The technology that's second-nature to you is going to be really important to countries like this," Cohen told the Internet gurus at the beginning of their adventure.

He didn't know the half of it. The group met with a representative of the National Museum of Iraq, who told them, "We do not have a security system. We do not have a fire alarm system. We would welcome any idea, any kind of help." "Do you have a website for the museum?" one of the social-networkers offered helpfully. At a meeting with university students Heiferman became distraught that the young Iraqis were more interested in boring government jobs building civil society than in creating tech startups. "You should think of yourselves as social entrepreneurs!" he exhorted them. But the trip's big success came from a meeting with Barham Salih, Iraq's deputy prime minister. They convinced him to start Twittering. He has embraced the medium. On June 9, for instance, he tweeted: "Just did the Colbert Report.. First ever appearance for me on this kind of a show..Great fun!"



As the Iranian protests unfolded, *PC* magazine asked, "How did we have revolutions before Twitter?" At the height of the action, Twitter was logging 220,000 tweets an hour about Iran. Three thousand YouTube videos were uploaded from Iran, along with some 2 million blog posts. Mir-Hussein Mousavi was "friended" by 100,000 people on Facebook. However impolite the comparison, the Iranian radicals of 1979 had none of those advantages, yet managed to bring down the shah. It is worth contemplating what they had that Twitter doesn't.

But whatever its political limits, Twitter works well as a window into a certain kind of mindset. There was something peculiarly Obama-esque about the simultaneous embrace of the Iranian cause through Twitter and the reluctance to back formal support from any Western government. The same people who turned their Twitter icons green found deep wisdom in the West's official hands-off approach to the protestors.

In the end, what matters to social-networkers isn't action or results, but words and feelings and poses. Which is why they become so invested in their own agency, needing to see the effects of their support everywhere around them. Because if turning your website green doesn't help the Iranian cause, then you might as well have just read about it in the *New York Times* two days later, like all the other saps. It means that whatever your wishes or hopes, the universe is indifferent. For people who believe that they are the ones they've been waiting for, this must be a terrifying prospect.

Fortunately for the Twitterers, there is one sector of the universe that always responds to their attention—the media. On the weekend the Iranian protests began, Twitterers became preoccupied with what they deemed CNN's inadequate coverage of the events. So they set up a designated Twitter feed to criticize the network. By Monday CNN had correspondent Octavia Nasr on the air, reading Tweets aloud as they appeared on her BlackBerry. ♦

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Don't Go There

Martha's Vineyard is not the best presidential vacation site. BY NOEMIE EMERY

Dear Mr. President, How nice to know you will summer on Martha's Vineyard at Blue Heron Farm, where the amenities are said to be fabulous. "The 28-acre estate, $20 million enclave is located in Chilmark," CBS told us. "The farm suits Obama to a tee with golf facilities, a pool, basketball court, private beach, and a rental price tag of up to $50,000 a week."

What happened? Versailles and The Breakers were rented already? Is this how you empathize with the suffering masses, whose pain you feel so at town meetings? What is it with real estate and you liberal Democrats? There's John Kerry, who has five mansions, including a ski chalet whose every last stone was brought over from England; and John Edwards, whose "house" looks like five of them strung together, and which has not one, but two, stages, and its own private gym. Perhaps you could use "John's Lounge," if John isn't in it, off making one of his speeches on poverty or the unsustainable gaps between the lives of rich and poor people. There really are Two Americas. No one knows it better than do you and Kerry and Edwards, and you know which one you belong to. As will the swing voters, as they stay at home nursing their shrunken portfolios, and watching you splash on the beach on TV.

And then there's the matter of the Vineyard itself, whose place in the history of presidential vacations has not been terribly good. "The enemy of economic populism is wealth and privilege," writes Dick Morris, the guru who helped Bill Clinton return from the political dead after having been poleaxed in the 1994 midterm elections. "The enemy of social populism is the intellectual and cultural elite." Put it this way, and the Vineyard turns into the ultimate twofer when it comes to being a jinx on political fortunes. It is the place where the intellectual and cultural elite wallow not only in self-satisfaction but in privilege beyond all belief. The Clintons pioneered the presidential use of the Vineyard for summer vacations, and for them, these vacations came in two kinds: the pride-goeth-before-a-fall-pre-Republican Congress vacations of 1993-94, and the post-confession Remorse Vacation of the impeachment summer, than which no worse First Vacation has ever occurred.

For the first two, the Clintons wallowed in love, but managed to pay zilch for the privilege, camping out in pads borrowed from friends—in 1993 the 15-acre spread with ocean view of Robert S. McNamara, whose own political history was not all that happy, and in 1994 the 20-acre estate of a rich liberal donor, which featured, in the words of Sally Bedell Smith, the Clintons' biographer, "a spacious, nineteenth century shingled house, hammocks, horses, a pet pig, and a guest cottage, where Bill could retreat to work and read." Love the pig, don't you?

There, as Smith says, they mixed with the humble folk of the island, Kay Graham, Beverly Sills, Bill and Rose Styron, Walter Cronkite, various Kennedys, Christopher Reeve, Michael J. Fox, and Glenn Close. "Everywhere else, the Clintons were being judged," one guest told the author, but not on the Vineyard. "It was unconditional love." They came home from this to the '94 wipeout. After they had lost both the House and the Senate, Morris would see this love as having been all too unconditional, wrapping the president in a deceptive cocoon of approval, not shared by the country at large.

When Morris came in to help Clinton recover, keeping the Clintons away from the Vineyard became one of his paramount aims. He said the early vacations had hurt the president politically—"photos of him on a yacht with Jackie Onassis did not help his populist image"—and began planning a series of more homey outings that would help him go up in the polls. With the assistance of Mark Penn, he polled for things that appealed to swing voters, and planned vacations around them. Swing voters liked hiking. Swing voters liked baseball. They did not like cruising with Carly Simon on a yacht. "I presented the strategy group with a list of approved presidential activities," Morris later related. They proposed "that he take a mountain vacation, that he hike and camp out in a tent." This did not thrill Clinton, who groused, and "began to pose hypotheticals. 'What if I hike, set up my campsite, but I don't catch anything?'" he asked sarcastically. "'Will that be OK?'" Nonetheless, Morris prevailed, and in 1995 and 1996 the president went on more rugged vacations, camping in the Rockies and at Jackson Hole in Wyoming, where he borrowed a ranch from Senator Jay Rockefeller but avoided the jet set and boats. As you recall, Clinton began rising in the polls in those years.

With this in mind, the White House went into a panic when the Clintons were asked to the Vineyard for a celebrity wedding in the fall of 1995, just as the reelection campaign kicked off. "I groaned when I heard," Morris recalled, and he started conniving with Chief of Staff Leon Panetta and others to keep the First Couple away. He and George Stephanopoulos began plotting to limit the Clintons' time on the island; Panetta suggested "it was hurricane season, and maybe the president wouldn't be able to fly." The First Couple did go, but Morris lucked out when a storm arrived, and pushed the event off the front pages. "Coverage of the wedding was all but drowned out by the focus on Hurricane Opal," as Morris gloated. "The storm didn't stop the Clintons from going, but it did force their early return."

Noemie Emery is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD *and a columnist for the* Washington Examiner.

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And then there was the 1998 Vacation From Hell, just days after Clinton's speech admitting his intern-al affair. It kicked off with the Clintons' walk across the White House lawn to the helicopter, watched by soap opera addicts everywhere, followed by reports of who said what to whom on the flight to the Vineyard, and then reports through the week: Was Bill in or out of the doghouse, and did they look at each other, and were they smiling, and did they talk to each other yet? Suffice it to say that one does not want to start a family holiday with a confession on television of fooling around with a college-age intern. Suffice it to say, too, that the Vineyard hasn't been good to the Clintons, and is a place a president might really want to avoid.

Really, Mr. President, do you need all of this karma, all of this agita, and all of these bad vibes? Back in the day, as the *Washington Post*'s Al Kamen reminds us, Bill himself got "positively hammered in the press" for turning his back on his homeboy persona to kick up his heels with the privileged. ("Clinton Among the Swells," the *New York Times* scolded.) And the Clintons went to this glitzy, blue-state, and celebrity playground during good times and not a recession, didn't throw money around in a mogul-like manner, and weren't recently on the wrong end of a town-v.-gown drama, with one of their friends (on the gown end of the fracas) summering on the Vineyard himself. On the other hand, the Clintons' poll numbers also were falling, and they were also in the midst of a huge fight on health care, which they ended up losing.

Morris suspects the Vineyard frolicking played a part in this loss. You could do worse than to call up Dick Morris and ask him to run polls on voter-friendly vacations, voter-friendly locations, and recreational sports that appeal to swing voters, of the kind you are losing. Forget Massachusetts, and think of Ohio. Forget Chilmark, Oak Bluffs, and the Vineyard; the people who summer there love you already. Michigan is less "in," but it is much more important. Macomb County is lovely at this time of the year.

But if you insist on defying the odds and the gods with your Vineyard fixation, Morris still has some words of advice. As he wrote later about the contentious celebrity wedding, "We did succeed in limiting the time they were on the Vineyard and arranged to follow the visit with a trip to the Boston area and . . . a statement about protecting police." Police! Where have we heard that word lately? The perfect idea. Stop off at the Cambridge police headquarters, and talk to the folks there. Call on your new friend James Crowley, and bring your old friend Skip Gates with you. He's just been to your house, so it's only expected. Sit in his garden. And you bring the beer. ♦

The Untimely Demise of the F-22

A triumph for the military-industrial complex.

BY MICHAEL GOLDFARB

In his farewell address, President Eisenhower warned "against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex." Last month, John McCain invoked that warning as he fought alongside the Obama administration and Senate Democrats to strip a relatively paltry $1.75 billion in funding for the Lockheed Martin F-22A Raptor out of the defense authorization bill, delivering the death blow to a program that currently produces the world's only fifth-generation fighter.

Just 183 F-22s have been built, and after another 4 are completed this year, the production line will be shut down for good. A fleet of that size "puts execution of our current national military strategy at high risk in the near to mid-term," General John Corley, commander of Air Combat Command, told Senator Saxby Chambliss in a letter in June. A few weeks before that, Air Force chief of staff General Norton A. Schwartz appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee and characterized the risk to national security from halting F-22 procurement at 187 as "moderate to high." And in April retired General Richard Hawley, a former commander of Air Combat Command, told a Senate committee that the administration's recommendation to kill the F-22 "rests on an assertion that we cannot afford to equip our airmen, on whom we rely to gain and maintain air superiority, with the best weapons that our defense industrial base has developed."

The Air Force had initially planned to purchase some 750 of the super-stealthy jet fighter, but that number steadily dwindled as costs skyrocketed and delays mounted—a "death spiral" that now seems to afflict every Air Force procurement program but is most acutely felt in the development and production of jet fighters.

More than $60 billion has been spent on the research, development, and procurement of the F-22, putting the per unit cost of each aircraft at roughly $340 million. But the marginal cost of buying one additional aircraft has come down to (just!) $138 million, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies estimated that a larger order of 70 additional aircraft could have brought that

Michael Goldfarb is online editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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number down to $70 million a pop.

Yet when Secretary of Defense Robert Gates went to Chicago last month to make the administration's case for killing the program (and several others), he didn't portray the F-22 as unaffordable—just unnecessary. Gates said the administration wanted to end F-22 production in favor of another jet, the F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter, which has yet to enter production. "If properly supported, the F-35 will be the backbone of America's tactical aviation fleet for decades to come," Gates said in the speech, "if—and it's a big if—money is not drained away to spend on other aircraft."

Opponents of the F-22 were careful to frame the fight against continued procurement as a fight against wasteful spending and the special interests that profit from it. "We do not need these planes," Obama said in a letter to senators from his own party after first the House and then the Senate Armed Services Committees voted to add funding for the aircraft to a Pentagon budget that requested none. Obama threatened to veto his own defense authorization bill if the funding wasn't stripped out.

The plane's critics could offer a litany of reasons for why we didn't need the planes, some more compelling than others. The F-22 "has not supported a single mission in Iraq or Afghanistan," Colorado senator Michael Bennet said. Oregon Democrat Ron Wyden said more money for the F-22 would be "the very definition of government waste" and as proof pointed to the fact that the Pentagon, which "hasn't exactly been shy about calling for additional weapons, say[s] this is unnecessary." "It is a cold war relic," declared the military experts who edit the *New York Times*, noting that it was conceived to counter a Soviet threat that never materialized. And just days before the Senate vote, the administration engineered a *Washington Post* report that quoted one anonymous Pentagon official blasting the F-22 as incapable of flying more than an average of "1.7 hours before it gets a critical failure."

The F-22 was unnecessary because the Air Force doesn't use it, doesn't want it, and doesn't need it—and the plane doesn't work anyway. It would be madness not to kill the thing and start buying the more affordable, more effective, more relevant F-35. Or so the administration said. "I reject the notion that we have to waste billions of taxpayer dollars on outdated and unnecessary defense products to keep this nation secure," President Obama said in a celebratory address from the Rose Garden after F-22 funding was defeated in the Senate. But just two days later, *Congressional Quarterly* reported the existence of a Pentagon study showing that the F-35, the plane Gates said would be "the backbone of America's tactical aviation fleet for decades to come," was running some two years behind schedule—it won't move out of development and into production until 2016 at the earliest.

In May the Government Accountability Office estimated that U.S. investment in the F-35 would total "more than $300 billion to develop and procure 2,456 aircraft over the next 25 years." That works out to about $122 million and change for each aircraft. Allied militaries are expected to buy at least 700 additional F-35s. The jet will come in at least five variants: a conventional fighter for the Air Force, a short takeoff, vertical-landing variant for the Marines, a carrier version for the Navy, and export versions of the Air Force and Marines variants. Not surprisingly, a program this complicated has already entered its own death spiral—the estimated cost of the program has risen 45 percent since 2001, and Congress has already responded by trimming the total procurement by more than 500 planes. This latest two-year delay could cost an additional $7.4 billion according to the Pentagon's report—assuming, of course, that there are no further delays or overruns.

But even if by some miracle the defense industry is able to deliver the F-35 on budget and on time from here on out, the F-35 will never be able to do what the F-22 does. The F-35 will be a more versatile plane, capable of operating from a wide variety of platforms and performing a more diverse set of missions—including a far more robust close-air support function. But it is not a pure air- to-air fighter like the F-22. After the Senate vote, General Peter Pawling, who moved to the staff of U.S. Pacific Command earlier this year after serving as commander of the Hawaii Air National Guard's 154th Wing, told *Aviation Week*'s David Fulghum that he was "still planning on getting those airplanes." "There is nothing out there that can fly against it," Pawling said. "If we had a major conflict [against someone with advanced air defenses], I can't imagine going in there with anything but an F-22."

Indeed, that same day Fulghum quoted another Air Force official, this one identified only as a "senior intelligence officer." "The F-35 is not an F-22 by a long shot," he told Fulghum, "there's no way it's going to penetrate Chinese Air Defenses if there's ever a clash." Concerns about the F-35's ability to penetrate sophisticated air defenses center on doubts about just how stealthy the plane will be. A study published earlier this year by *Air Power Australia* (Australia is one of the F-35 partner countries) concluded that the Joint Strike Fighter is "demonstrably not a true stealth aircraft in the sense of designs like the F-117A, B-2A, and F-22A." The F-22 can also fly higher, faster, and farther than the F-35 and all while carrying twice as many air-to-air weapons in stealth mode.

Which may explain why some potential customers for the F-35, including Japan, Australia, and Israel, have expressed interest in purchasing the F-22 instead and have lobbied the U.S. government to repeal a statute prohibiting export of the fighter. The Japanese in particular have pushed for access to the F-22—even though the U.S. government put the price for just 40 planes at $11.6 billion, or $290 million per aircraft. Putting 40 additional F-22s in the Western Pacific would have obvious military advantages, and the sale would allow the government to recover sunk costs while reducing the marginal cost of additional aircraft for the Air Force, but neither the Air Force nor industry is pushing for such a sale.

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There are some questions opponents of the F-22 ought to be asking: Why do our richest allies (as well as our own air combat commanders) seem to prefer the F-22 to the F-35? Why is it that the Obama administration, the defense industry, and Congress have all lined up against the F-22—a plane with known costs and capabilities—in favor of a plane that may cost more and offer less? Why isn't Lockheed pushing to repeal the export ban on the F-22? For that matter, why did Lockheed stop lobbying the Hill for continued production of the F-22 once the Gates budget came out? And why did Lockheed request that Boeing—the junior partner on the F-22, responsible for about a third of the aircraft's production—cease its own lobbying campaign on behalf of the aircraft?

There is one obvious explanation for all of this: The military-industrial complex stands to make a lot more money off the F-35 than it could from the F-22. And Boeing is not a Lockheed Martin partner on the F-35. So once the F-22 production line closes, Boeing will be out of the fighter business entirely, leaving Lockheed the U.S. government's only supplier of fighter aircraft.

The irony of the political fight over the F-22 is that the president's supporters, in their eagerness to strike a blow against the military-industrial complex, unwittingly ended up doing a defense industry giant's dirty work for it. When the F-22 production line dies, the last major obstacle to the F-35 will die with it. There will be no choice but to build the F-35—whatever the cost or the aircraft's limitations.

The Obama administration is cutting procurement programs that it deems unnecessary and irrelevant given the current threat environment, but it was investment in technologies like the F-22 that deterred America's competitors from trying to challenge American air superiority in the first place. It's been 57 years since an American soldier on the ground was killed by enemy airpower. Whether sought or unsought, the unwarranted influence of the military-industrial complex has put that legacy at risk. ♦

A War Grows in Afghanistan

Does Obama have the courage to win it?

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

For months, we've been hearing about deteriorating conditions in Afghanistan. Insurgent attacks are up. Coalition casualties are increasing. Poppy crops are flourishing. The Taliban is expanding its presence. Parts of the country are ungovernable. And where there is government, it's corrupt.

The public perception created by such reports is that Afghanistan is a disaster. The problem is that it's not a disaster. It's much, much worse.

And that's very bad news for Barack Obama. As a candidate, he argued that Afghanistan was the good war and that winning there was critical to U.S. national security. This fall, we will see whether he meant it. General Stanley McChrystal, the new U.S. commander in Afghanistan, is expected later this month to request an increase in troop levels there as part of a comprehensive new counterinsurgency strategy. Such an undertaking would be risky and expensive. Congressional Democrats, led by Nancy Pelosi, are already pressuring Obama to scale back U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, and they have considerable support among high-level national security aides in the White House and, perhaps more important, from the president's top political advisers.

The consequences of his decision—for the country and for the president—are huge.

"I have argued for years that we lack the resources to finish the job because of our commitment to Iraq. That's what the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said earlier this month," Obama proclaimed in a major foreign policy address on July 15, 2008. "And that's why, as president, I will make the fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban the top priority that it should be. This is a war that we have to win."

In the early days of his administration, Obama seemed determined to make good on his pledge. Three weeks after his inauguration, he added 17,000 U.S. soldiers to the 36,000 already in the country. The White House had not yet completed its comprehensive Afghanistan policy review, and the fact that Obama was not waiting to send reinforcements gave heart to those advocating a more robust strategy for the troubled country. But there were also signs that Obama was sensitive to the potential political backlash he faced from the left. He made the move without fanfare, announcing it with a written statement rather than with a Rose Garden ceremony or a major speech.

On March 27, however, Obama announced a new strategy for Afghanistan that included another 4,000 troops and, importantly for a president who places so much emphasis on his rhetoric, a speech in which he unequivocally stated his commitment to defeating "the greatest threat to our people."

> As president, my greatest responsibility is to protect the American people. We are not in Afghanistan to control that country or to dictate its future. We are in Afghanistan to confront a common enemy that threatens the United States, our friends and allies, and the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan who have suffered the most at the hands of violent extremists.

He punctuated his explanation with a blunt assessment of the consequences

Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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of failure. "The safety of people around the world is at stake."

The plan received praise from across the ideological spectrum. Liberals, who might have been expected to denounce the escalation, said little other than to express their approval of the president's emphasis on diplomacy and multilateralism. Conservatives were encouraged by Obama's get-tough-on-terrorists rhetoric—"we will defeat you," he said—and his willingness to commit more troops.

But concerns remained. In a speech to the Foreign Policy Initiative on March 31, 2009, four days after Obama's announcement, Senator John McCain offered words of support for the president's approach. But he also warned that Obama could face charges of LBJ-style incrementalism because he had refused to provide General David McKiernan with the full complement of troops he had requested—the general had called for an additional 30,000 men to be deployed to Afghanistan. It was more analysis than criticism, but his message was clear.

In the four months since, McCain says he has seen "alarming signs" that Obama may not have meant what he said about winning in Afghanistan. In an interview on August 3, McCain blasted the White House for ruling out additional troops even before McChrystal, the man Obama chose to lead U.S. forces in Afghanistan, has had an opportunity to finish his strategic assessment of the war there.

McCain was particularly incensed by an article that appeared on the front page of the *Washington Post* on July 1. (He brought it up to me without being asked about it.) Bob Woodward had accompanied Obama's national security adviser, General James Jones, on a trip to Afghanistan. Woodward's article described, with in-the-room detail, Jones warning against requesting more troops. General Lawrence Nicholson had told Jones that the force was "a little light," and Jones said that the troop levels had been decided and that requests for more were unwelcome.

> Well, Jones went on, after all those additional troops, 17,000 plus 4,000 more, if there were new requests for force now, the president would quite likely have "a Whiskey Tango Foxtrot moment." Everyone in the room caught the phonetic reference to WTF—which in the military and elsewhere means "What the [expletive]?"
>
> Nicholson and his colonels—all or nearly all veterans of Iraq—seemed to blanch at the unambiguous message that this might be all the troops they were going to get.

McCain says he was "startled" and "taken aback" when he read the piece. "The implications appear to be a signal to them that they shouldn't ask for more troops. Why else would you say the president will have a Whiskey-Tango-Foxtrot moment? How else could you interpret that?"

McCain says he has seen 'alarming signs' that Obama may not have meant what he said about winning in Afghanistan. In an interview on August 3, McCain blasted the White House for ruling out additional troops.

McCain shakes his head in disbelief and sips from a cup of coffee. "Frankly, to tell the military leaders what the president's reaction would be to an assessment that he needed more troops," he says, his voice trailing off. Congressional and Pentagon sources say that McChrystal has been getting the same message in private. "The last thing the White House wants is for McChrystal to ask for more troops," says a Republican member of Congress briefed about Afghanistan policy.

And yet McChrystal, described by those who have worked with him as a "straight shooter," appears poised to make such a request. When he assumed the command back in June, Defense Secretary Robert Gates told him to take 60 days to conduct a comprehensive review of Afghanistan. McChrystal assembled a diverse team of military experts—from think tank scholars to former officers, including both hawks and doves—who spent a month in Afghanistan with the general and his top military aides. The consensus of that group is that the United States needs to dramatically expand the size of the Afghan National Army and needs to add—perhaps significantly—to U.S. troop levels. "They believe there is a consensus among themselves that more troops are necessary," says the Republican member of Congress.

It is the second part of their recommendation that sets up a potentially significant fight this fall over the role of the United States in Afghanistan. No one knows exactly how many troops McChrystal will request, but some outside experts have said that as many as 50,000 additional troops would be needed to conduct a serious counterinsurgency campaign. McChrystal's own staff is now conducting a "troop-to-task" analysis of how many soldiers would be needed to meet the objectives the president laid out in his March 27 speech: "to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future." But according to several sources familiar with McChrystal's thinking, he is unlikely to scale back his request because of political concerns.

A key player in the coming debate will be General David Petraeus, head of U.S. Central Command. "I would point out that [McChrystal] has an incredibly close relationship with Petraeus and I would assume that he would have Petraeus's backing," says McCain, who has had numerous conversations with both generals about Afghanistan in the past several weeks. "That's why I think it poses such a dilemma for the president."

So does McCain believe that Obama has the political courage to stay? "I don't know," he says. "He did make a commitment to win in Afghanistan." ♦

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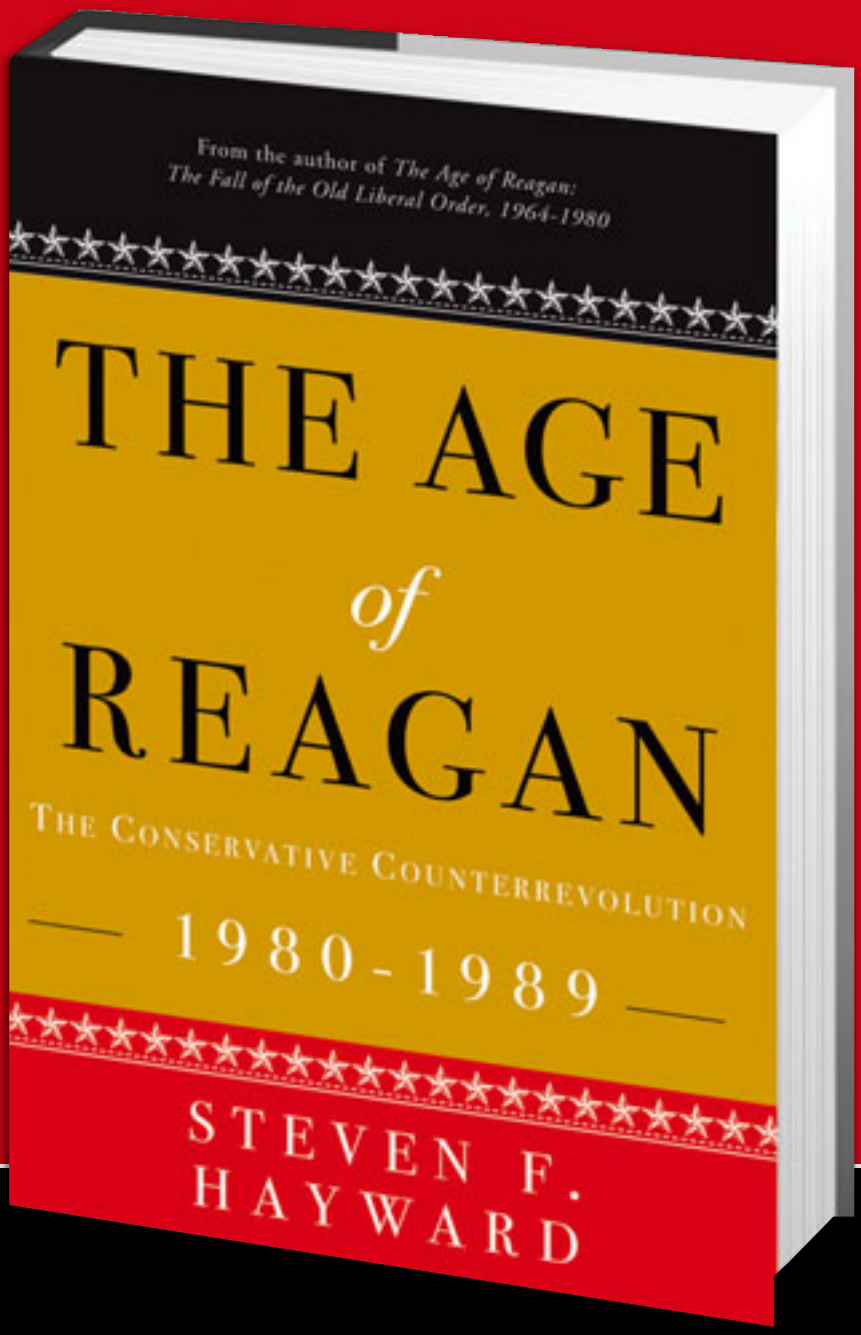

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The Zubaydah Dossier

Assertions that the terrorist was anything other than a central figure in al Qaeda's inner circle are ludicrous.

By Thomas Joscelyn

During the early hours of March 28, 2002, elite teams from the Pakistani and American counterterrorism forces stormed more than a dozen locations throughout Pakistan. Their target was one of the most wanted men on the planet—the al Qaeda commander Abu Zubaydah. For weeks, America's intelligence agencies had been compiling and analyzing intercepts hoping to pinpoint Zubaydah's location. The spooks were not exactly sure where he was, but they had narrowed the possibilities to nine spots in Faisalabad and a handful of other sites around Pakistan. Before dawn, the joint Pakistani-American task forces raided them all.

Abu Zubaydah

One of the targets in Faisalabad was a safe house run by Lashkar-e-Taiba, an al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist organization based in Pakistan. As reported by Ronald Kessler in his book *The Terrorist Watch* (2007), the place was more of a small fortress than a residence. The perimeter fence was electrified. The door was reinforced with steel. Surveillance suggested all was quiet, but the first attempt to break through the compound's defenses failed and awoke the residents. Chaos ensued. After finally breaking through the door, the agents found themselves face-to-face with junior-level terrorists wielding knives and whatever other weapons they could improvise. One even tried to strangle a Pakistani officer with piano wire. A few scampered to the roof, but there was no escape. All of the terrorists living in the house were quickly killed or captured, among them Abu Zubaydah.

He had been gravely wounded, shot in the leg, groin, and stomach during the raid, and the CIA flew in a doctor from Johns Hopkins Medical Center to make sure Zubaydah stayed with the living. The U.S. government wanted him to be able to answer questions. No one could have known it at the time, but this was the beginning of the most controversial wartime detention in American history.

Zubaydah is at the heart of the debate over the use of so-called "enhanced interrogation techniques" (EITs). Memos written by Bush administration lawyers demonstrate that when they approved the use of EITs in 2002, it was principally Zubaydah they had in mind. As far as we know, waterboarding, the most controversial of the EITs, was used on only three detainees, and Zubaydah was the first. But it is not just the use of EITs on Zubaydah that has caused the controversy. There has been a consistent and determined effort to undermine the very idea that he was a high-level figure within al Qaeda.

When news of Zubaydah's capture was first reported, there was a genuine sense of accomplishment. At the time, the war on terror was already six months old, but few senior al Qaeda members had been captured. The most notable successes had come on the battlefield in Afghanistan, with the early rout of the Taliban and the deaths of several key al Qaeda figures. But, the raid in Faisalabad changed that. On April 6, 2002, the editors of the *New York Times* summarized the conventional wisdom as it then existed when they wrote that it was "hard to overstate the significance" of Zubaydah's capture. Press accounts varied in their descriptions of Zubaydah, but he was almost always described as a "high-ranking al Qaeda member," or "Osama bin Laden's lieutenant," or an "al Qaeda commander," or some other phrase that made his status within al Qaeda clear. There was a widespread hope that the intelligence gleaned during Zubaydah's interrogations would fill in some of the many holes in America's knowledge of al Qaeda.

In more recent years, however, some leading press outlets have begun questioning Zubaydah's importance. A March 29, 2009, front-page article by Peter Finn and Joby Warrick in the *Washington Post* summed up the new conventional wisdom. Zubaydah was not really a top al Qaeda operative, but merely a "fixer" for "radical Muslim ideologues," who only began to work with al Qaeda after the September 11 attacks.

Thomas Joscelyn is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

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What's worse, alleged Finn and Warrick: The harsh interrogation techniques used on Zubaydah "foiled no plots."

A growing chorus in the media is repeating this storyline as if it were true, and Zubaydah's own lawyers have begun arguing that their client's stature was overstated by the Bush administration for political reasons. (Lawyers for other detainees are following suit and suggesting any alleged ties between their clients and Zubaydah are of only minor importance.) Yet the *Post*'s reporting is utterly wrong. A review of readily available public sources easily debunks the argument that Zubaydah was not a senior al Qaeda member and makes it clear that Zubaydah gave up crucial details about fellow terrorists during his interrogations. These details undoubtedly contributed to the Bush administration's success in stopping a litany of attacks from unfolding. As the Obama administration deliberates on how to handle the detainees still at Guantánamo Bay, getting out the facts about Abu Zubaydah has taken on a new urgency.

Abu Zubaydah was born Zayn al-Abidin Muhammad Hussein to a Palestinian father and a Jordanian mother in Saudi Arabia in 1971. The details of his early career remain murky. By some accounts, he was first recruited by Hamas and later Ayman al Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad. What we do know is that in the early 1990s, he traveled to Afghanistan to wage jihad and there demonstrated a preternatural talent for terrorism, quickly rising through al Qaeda's ranks.

Osama bin Laden, for whom Zubaydah plotted attacks and recruited terrorists

In his diary, which was recovered during the Faisalabad raid, Zubaydah noted that he was heading off to an al Qaeda terrorist training camp in 1992. "Perhaps later I will tell you about the Qaeda and bin Laden group," Zubaydah wrote. By 1996, Zubaydah was moving al Qaeda members from Sudan to Afghanistan.

This was no small task. Al Qaeda's relocation left the organization exposed to a variety of security risks, especially from foreign governments that were just becoming aware of the full scope of bin Laden's designs. Sudan had proved a hospitable haven during the first half of the 1990s, but because of pressure from the Sudanese government in the mid-1990s, the organization needed a new central base. A successful relocation to war-torn Afghanistan was crucial for the organization's survival.

Zubaydah, who was only in his mid-20s at the time, was entrusted with overseeing travel arrangements for al Qaeda members at this juncture. According to a short biography of Zubaydah prepared by the Department of Defense, bin Laden was so impressed with Zubaydah's efforts that he recruited him to become one of al Qaeda's "senior travel facilitators."

Back in Afghanistan, Zubaydah began to assume more responsibilities. He not only arranged for terrorists to travel the globe, but also took over the running of the Khalden and Derunta training camps. Khalden had a long history, dating back to the jihad against the Soviets in the 1980s. Some, including the *Post*'s reporters, have suggested that Khalden was not really an al Qaeda training facility. This is rubbish, and Zubaydah himself is the main source of this claim. During his Combatant Status Review Tribunal at Guantánamo, Zubaydah pretended that Khalden was not really part of Osama bin Laden's terrorist empire. Why anyone would take Zubaydah at his word is a mystery, especially since so many pieces of public evidence contradict his statement. We know that many of al Qaeda's terrorists, including three of the September 11 hijackers, graduated from Khalden. Richard Reid, the would-be shoe bomber, and Zacarias Moussaoui, the would-be hijacker, both did as well. The truth is that Khalden was not *just* an al Qaeda training camp; terrorists from al Qaeda-allied organizations also trained there. But this does not mean the facility was not an al Qaeda camp. It just means that al Qaeda cooperated with various like-minded terrorist organizations. As for the Zubaydah-run Derunta training camp, al Qaeda experimented with chemical weapons there for years.

Zubaydah's dual role as senior travel facilitator and camp manager is enough to prove that he was a committed al Qaeda terrorist. But it would be selling him short to stop there. Sitting at the crossroads of al Qaeda's international operations, he ran sleeper cells around the globe.

It is no secret that Western intelligence services have found it difficult to penetrate al Qaeda. As far as we know, few spies have ever successfully gained the trust of the organization's leaders. One of the few known exceptions is a man who goes by the alias Omar Nasiri.

Nasiri was an Islamist who was recruited by al Qaeda in the mid-1990s. He trained at Khalden and Derunta, and impressed his handlers so much they introduced him to Zubaydah. Nasiri had longstanding ties in Europe, and Zubaydah recognized Nasiri's potential. Recruits with established ties to the West are especially valuable for al Qaeda because they can move around more easily and with less chance of being detected.

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Zubaydah "sent me back to Europe to work as a sleeper, to provide explosives expertise for attacks," Nasiri wrote in his book, *Inside the Jihad* (2006). But Nasiri was not just a sleeper agent, he was also a spy working for multiple Western intelligence agencies. As Nasiri met with al Qaeda agents in Europe and passed messages back and forth from Zubaydah, he reported on his doings to his Western handlers. Nasiri has no doubts about Zubaydah's importance. "Abu Zubaydah was bin Laden's chief recruiter for al Qaeda," Nasiri wrote. "He oversaw the administration of sleeper cells all over the world, and his name has appeared in connection to any number of attacks."

Zubaydah was, for instance, al Qaeda's point man for the attempted late 1999 attacks on the Los Angeles airport and sites in Jordan. Even though the so-called "millennium plots" failed, they revealed that al Qaeda had developed global tentacles capable of reaching targets thousands of miles apart at roughly the same time.

The plot against LAX was broken up when Ahmed Ressam was stopped by a suspicious customs official at the U.S.-Canadian border. A search of Ressam's rental car revealed it was filled with explosives, and he was quickly taken into custody. Ressam has subsequently been convicted of his role in the plot and cooperated with U.S. authorities.

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, about whom Zubaydah revealed key information

Ressam's chief revelation was that Zubaydah was the driving force behind the plot. Ressam explained that Zubaydah "is the person in charge of the camps," adding that he "receives young men from all countries" and is the commander who "accepts you or rejects you." Zubaydah "takes care of the expenses of the camps" and "makes arrangements for you when you travel coming in or leaving," Ressam said. Although Ressam claims he was left to choose the target for his attack, he admits he was taught "how to blow up the infrastructure of a country," including airports, at Khalden.

Ominously, Ressam told U.S. authorities that Zubaydah had been planning attacks against America since 1998, and Zubaydah had ordered him to procure Canadian passports "to give other people who had come to carry out operations in the U.S."

Zubaydah was equally at the heart of the Jordanian millennium operation. As Steve Coll reported in his excellent book *Ghost Wars* (2004), Jordanian intelligence listened in on a phone call from Zubaydah to a Jordanian al Qaeda cell. During the call, Zubaydah ordered the cell to carry out the attack, which was dubbed "the day of the millennium." Jordanian officials swooped in and arrested the cell's members. A search of their home revealed an assortment of bombmaking paraphernalia capable of producing explosives as powerful as 16 tons of TNT. Coll says the terrorists confessed to having already picked a target, a Radisson Hotel where American and Israeli tourists were expected to gather in celebration of the new millennium. They also planned to release cyanide gas inside a movie theater.

The millennium attacks' failure did not deter Zubaydah. U.S. intelligence kept hearing that Zubaydah had attacks in the pipeline. Former Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet famously said that the system was "blinking red" prior to the September 11 attacks—that is, intelligence reporting on the threat from al Qaeda became so extensive that officials were sure an attack was coming, even if they did not know where or when. As Tenet revealed in his book *At the Center of the Storm* (2007), the system was "blinking red" in large part because of Zubaydah: "Before 9/11 [Zubaydah's] name had been all over our threat reporting."

In May 2001, Tenet says he and other CIA officials met with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. They warned that Zubaydah "was working on attack plans." The CIA thought Zubaydah's target was likely to be in Israel, but U.S. assets elsewhere were at risk too.

In June, according to Tenet, the British let the CIA know "Zubaydah was planning suicide car bomb attacks against U.S. military targets in Saudi Arabia by the end of the month."

In July, a French Algerian named Djamel Beghal was arrested in Dubai as he attempted to return to France from Afghanistan. Beghal told authorities that Zubaydah had directed him to continue with al Qaeda's plots against the U.S. embassy and cultural center in Paris. Beghal was to arrange for multiple, simultaneous suicide bombings—al Qaeda's preferred modus operandi. As a sign of good faith, Zubaydah personally presented Beghal with gifts from Osama bin Laden. Like the millennium plotters, Beghal was arrested before he could go through with an attack.

On August 6, 2001, President Bush's daily intelligence briefing highlighted Zubaydah's role in bin Laden's designs for striking America. The briefing did not offer the type of specific information that could have been used to thwart the coming September 11 attacks, but it did include a noteworthy detail about al Qaeda's failed attack on LAX: "Ressam says Bin Laden was aware of the Los Angeles operation."

Given this prominence, U.S. authorities immediately suspected Zubaydah had played a significant role in the 9/11 operation. In retrospect, Zubaydah does not appear to have

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been central to the planning. This does not mean, however, that Zubaydah had no links to the attack. As mentioned above, three of the 9/11 hijackers trained at Zubaydah's Khalden camp. According to Congress's Joint Inquiry into the 9/11 attacks, Zubaydah "probably" met with another one of the hijackers, Nawaf al Hazmi, in Saudi Arabia in 1996. Zubaydah was reportedly on a mission to convince new recruits to travel to Afghanistan for training in al Qaeda's camps. Al Hazmi eventually did just that.

Then there is the issue of how al Qaeda financed the September 11 operation. Zubaydah raised $50,000 "from Saudi donors," according to the DoD's biography, for a future terrorist operation against Israel. The money was passed on to other al Qaeda leaders, who may have actually used the funds to finance the hijackers.

Regardless of how "directly linked to" the September 11 attacks Zubaydah was, it is clear that he was a senior al Qaeda terrorist. So, when authorities captured him in 2002, they had every reason to believe he knew the intimate details of al Qaeda's plots.

Ramzi Binalshibh, whose capture was aided by details from Zubaydah

With Zubaydah in custody, U.S. authorities set about finding a way to make him talk. The circumstances surrounding Zubaydah's interrogations differ depending on which sources you consult.

In *At the Center of the Storm*, George Tenet insisted that Zubaydah was coy at first. "Like many of the al Qaeda detainees, Abu Zubaydah originally thought that he could outsmart his questioners," Tenet wrote. In the book, Tenet implied that only after harsh interrogation techniques were employed did Zubaydah give up actionable intelligence that jeopardized al Qaeda's operations.

Ali Soufan, an FBI interrogator who questioned Zubaydah shortly after he was first detained, tells a different story. He says that Zubaydah gave up crucial details about al Qaeda's plotting before any of the harshest methods were employed. Soufan has clearly done masterful work in questioning al Qaeda terrorists, so his testimony should be taken seriously. But the press has seized on Soufan's testimony without reporting the obvious. With so many details about Zubaydah's interrogations still classified, it is impossible to tell precisely what happened. Many of the CIA employees and contractors involved in Zubaydah's harshest interrogations have said little publicly for the reason that there is still a chance they could be prosecuted for their actions. At a minimum, they risk strident criticism from the media, who have been obsessed with Zubaydah's handling for years. The result is a decidedly one-sided story.

We can, however, be certain that even Zubaydah's earliest interrogations were far from typical. For starters, he was seriously wounded when the questioning began. Even while he was recovering from his gunshot wounds, Zubaydah was being interrogated and so was already suffering from substantial pain when answering Soufan's and other interrogators' questions. There are also credible reports that authorities played with his pain-relief medication to manipulate his suffering and used forced nudity and sleep deprivation to wear him down. The *Post*'s own reporting, as first noted by Marc Thiessen (a former speechwriter for President Bush), suggests that some of these techniques were used prior to Zubaydah giving up some of the more sensitive details of al Qaeda's post-9/11 plotting. If this is true, then Zubaydah's earliest encounters were nothing like a by-the-book interrogation at an FBI office.

Regardless of the controversy over EITs, Soufan's testimony completely undercuts any notion that Zubaydah was a low-level al Qaeda hanger-on. Soufan says that Zubaydah referred to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed by his al Qaeda alias ("Mukhtar") and revealed his central role in planning the September 11 attacks. Simply put, there is no way Zubaydah could have known these details without being a member of al Qaeda's innermost circle.

Zubaydah also revealed crucial details about Jose Padilla and Binyam Mohamed during his early interrogations. Senior al Qaeda members initially considered dispatching Padilla and Mohamed to America for an attack utilizing a so-called "dirty bomb" of loose radiological material. But they eventually settled on a plot that would be easier to execute. Mohamed and Padilla were exploring the possibility of setting an apartment building on fire using natural gas lines when they were captured in April and May 2002, respectively.

Also in May, New York City went on high alert after Zubaydah revealed that al Qaeda was planning attacks on its landmarks. In particular, he said that al Qaeda wanted to bring down the bridge that was featured in the 1998 remake of the movie *Godzilla*. (There is no accounting for al Qaeda's taste in movies.) U.S. authorities realized Zubaydah meant the Brooklyn Bridge and put the city on alert. This information has been widely cited as evidence either that Zubaydah's intelligence was no good or that he successfully passed along disinformation to waste investigators' time. There is little doubt that Zubaydah, who is well-versed in counterinterrogation tactics, intention-

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ally deceived his interrogators at times. But the Brooklyn Bridge plot was real.

In April 2002, Iyman Faris, an al Qaeda agent who worked as an Ohio truck driver, returned to the United States from Afghanistan. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed had tasked Faris with determining whether you could bring down the Brooklyn Bridge by cutting its suspension cables with gas cutters. Faris decided that the plot was not feasible because the proper equipment was hard to come by, the structure of the bridge made it difficult to carry out, and security on the bridge was too tight. The idea of cutting down the Brooklyn Bridge's suspension cables one at a time is certainly implausible on its face, but it is proof that al Qaeda was planning an attack on the bridge, just as Zubaydah said.

Not all of al Qaeda's targets are so high-profile. A common argument is that if al Qaeda really wanted to kill Americans on American soil, the easiest way to go about it would be to shoot up a shopping mall. Well, Zubaydah told his interrogators about al Qaeda's desire to strike American malls, and Faris's Ohio al Qaeda cell was tasked with planning such an operation in 2002. Faris and members of the Ohio cell were arrested in 2003 and subsequently convicted on terrorism charges.

According to the office of the director of national intelligence, Zubaydah was also the first al Qaeda detainee to identify Adnan El Shukrijumah (aka Jafar al Tayyar or "Jafar the Pilot") as an al Qaeda operative who was likely to lead the next major attack on the American homeland. Other detainees, including Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, confirmed and expanded upon Zubaydah's admission. Shukrijumah has been the subject of a massive manhunt ever since. (The FBI is offering a $5 million reward for information leading to his arrest.)

According to a September 15, 2002, article in *Time*, Zubaydah also told his American interrogators about Omar al Faruq's role in al Qaeda. When al Faruq was arrested in June 2002, he was one of al Qaeda's highest-ranking commanders in Asia. *Time*, relying on sensitive CIA intelligence documents that had come into the magazine's possession, said al Faruq had confessed to extensive terrorist plotting. In particular, Zubaydah and another leading al Qaeda figure had ordered al Faruq to "plan large-scale attacks against U.S. interests in Indonesia, Malaysia, (the) Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan, Vietnam and Cambodia." The attacks were to take place on or near the first anniversary of 9/11.

Finally, in *At the Center of the Storm*, Tenet said that Zubaydah unwittingly gave up information that helped lead to the capture of Ramzi Binalshibh, al Qaeda's point man for the 9/11 operation. Binalshibh was captured on the first anniversary of the attacks. At the time, he was plotting an attack on planes flying out of Heathrow. Computer hard drives and other documents captured in the raid that netted Binalshibh demonstrated that he and al Qaeda were also considering attacks against U.S. military targets.

Look again at the al Qaeda terrorists referenced above. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Omar al Faruq, Ramzi Binalshibh, Jose Padilla, Binyam Mohamed, Iyman Faris, Adnan El Shukrijumah. These are some of the main men who conspired to attack America before and after September 11, 2001. To suggest that Zubaydah's interrogations did not foil a single plot, as the *Washington Post* did, is ludicrous. Information from Zubaydah played a major role in shutting down al Qaeda's post-9/11 attempts to strike America and American assets around the globe.

There is one way to clear up all of the confusion that now surrounds Abu Zubaydah's story. President Obama could declassify the reports pertaining to Zubaydah's interrogations. While there is already plenty of publicly available information that undermines the notion that Zubaydah was unimportant and his interrogations fruitless, the press remains willing to ignore it. Declassified memos and reports would undoubtedly lead to a more informed debate.

The president certainly recognizes the usefulness of declassified memos in shaping public opinion. In one of his first acts in office, President Obama banned the use of EITs. Then he selectively declassified and released the memos justifying the use of such techniques in rare situations written by lawyers in the Bush administration. The memos Obama decided to make public discussed the types of interrogation tactics that could be used, but said little about the intelligence that was collected. That is, the memos, and the way they were declassified, were all about us. Missing was the story of what al Qaeda was up to following the September 11 attacks, and how additional attacks were stopped. This is why former Vice President Dick Cheney has requested two additional memos be declassified, to give the American public a fuller picture. The CIA has rejected Cheney's request.

There is certainly room for debate when it comes to how America should interrogate high-value detainees. But we have reached a point where the story is exclusively and myopically focused on partisan politics and claims of American wrongdoing. Our vision of the enemy has become clouded once again—so much so, that a major al Qaeda terrorist is now treated as a know-nothing bystander. The full story of al Qaeda's terror, and Abu Zubaydah's role in the network's operations, remains locked behind a classified door in Washington.

Only President Obama has the key. ♦

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Peace, It's Wonderful

But winning it is hard work. BY GARY SCHMITT

Late in 2007 Michael Semple, an Irishman working as a top official for the European Union in Afghanistan, and Mervyn Patterson, a Briton employed as a political officer for the United Nations in Afghanistan, were ordered by the Afghan government to leave the country. According to various press accounts, President Hamid Karzai gave the order after discovering that Semple and Patterson had been engaged in talks with local Taliban leaders in the province of Helmand without coordination or guidance from Kabul.

Semple, in particular, was no ordinary EU bureaucrat: Fluent in Dari, he had worked in Afghanistan for close to two decades and had, as a result, extensive contacts within the Taliban. And while Semple and Patterson's activities might have been at odds with the policy of Kabul, any number of other sources were reporting that it was consistent with the British government's own efforts at the time to reach out to the Taliban. As one source was quoted as saying, British intelligence "officers were understood to have sought peace directly with the Taliban, with them coming across as some sort of armed militia."

If true, what London presumably had in mind was to create in Afghanistan a dynamic similar to the so-called Anbar Awakening in Iraq, during which former Sunni insurgents flipped to the side of the government in exchange for being allowed to maintain an armed presence in their own communities.

Certainly, the British had good reason to be reaching out to the Taliban in December 2007. Having just retaken the Helmand town of Musa Qala from Taliban forces earlier that month, British troops were in the precarious position of trying to hold both Musa Qala and large swaths of Helmand to the south, and do so with too few troops. In addition, there were any number of officials in London who believed that the way forward in Afghanistan would come not by succeeding militarily but through talks designed to "reconcile" the Taliban with the new order in Afghanistan.

Talking to Terrorists
Making Peace in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country
by John Bew, Martyn Frampton, and Inigo Gurruchaga
Columbia, 256 pp., $27.50

This was, after all, precisely the process that had allowed Britain to end the "troubles" in Northern Ireland just a few years earlier. Wasn't it talks, not heavy-handed security measures, that pulled the seemingly irreconcilable Irish Republican Army into laying down its arms and accepting a political solution?

You could paper the walls with quotations from commentators and onetime officials to the effect that it was not until the British government understood that it could not defeat the IRA militarily that progress could be made on devising a settlement with which all parties in Northern Ireland could live. It's also bandied about that the lessons from that experience are applicable far and wide. As Lord Mandelson, the former secretary of state for Northern Ireland and (currently) first secretary of state in the Brown cabinet, has suggested: When it comes to addressing the threat of Islamist terrorism, the United States could learn a thing or two from the British experience in fighting Irish terrorism. Rather than engage in a "war on terror," it was London's decision to "negotiate with the IRA through its political wing rather than [trying] to defeat it," which ultimately proved successful.

Similarly, Jonathan Powell, former chief of staff to Tony Blair, has argued in the case of Northern Ireland that "maintaining contact" with the terrorists was critical and that setting a precondition for talks is "always an error." From this, he concludes, "talking to your enemy" is absolutely necessary and, more broadly, "to argue that al Qaeda or the Taliban are different . . . is nonsense."

With this as the reigning view of how the IRA was "brought in from the cold," it's no surprise that Semple and Patterson (both originally from Ulster) tried to apply in Afghanistan the model of conflict resolution that they believed had been the winning formula in Northern Ireland.

Nor has attachment to the Northern Ireland model diminished in the two years since. In a recent set of remarks, coming on the heels of one of the bloodiest months of fighting for British forces in Afghanistan, Foreign Secretary David Miliband argued before a NATO audience that a key problem in Afghanistan was that the Afghan government has not sufficiently reached out to the Taliban and made it clear that they would have a seat at the table in governing the country if they were only willing to put aside their attachment to a

Gary Schmitt is resident scholar and director of advanced strategic studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

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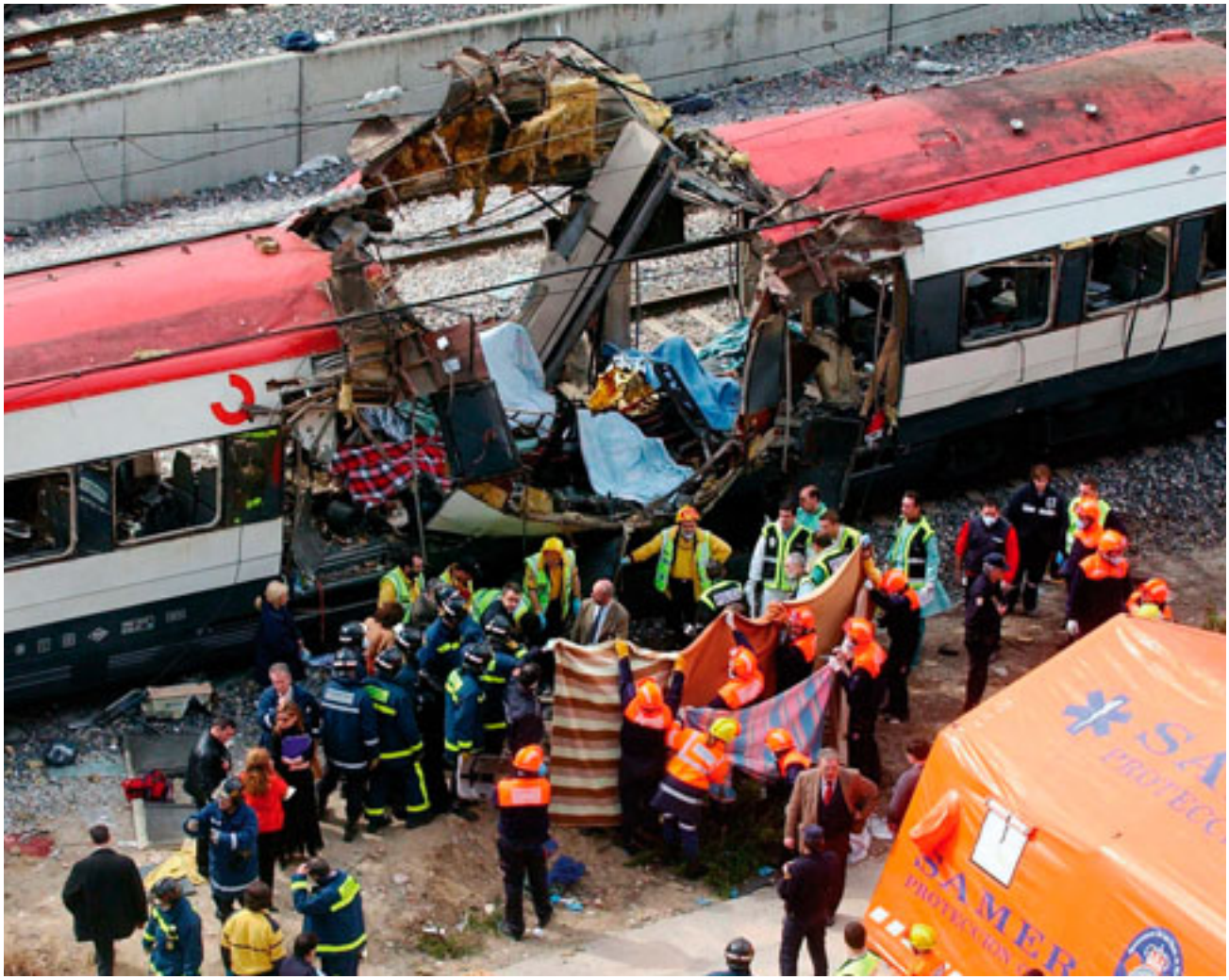

Aftermath of the Madrid train bombing, March 11, 2004

PAUL WHITE / ASSOCIATED PRESS

global jihadist agenda. This followed remarks by the head of Britain's development agency, Douglas Alexander, who has explicitly tied the prospect of (and need for) such talks with the Taliban to those that had ended the conflict in Northern Ireland.

However, according to this marvelous new study, *Talking to Terrorists: Making Peace in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country*, there are serious reasons to doubt that the model of conflict resolution relied on here is an accurate account of what *actually* happened in Northern Ireland and, therefore, a realistic guide for dealing with similar terrorist insurgencies.

Was London's willingness to engage in talks with the Irish Republican Army really the prime mover in changing the dynamic and creating the conditions for the IRA to lay down its arms? Although authors John Bew, Martyn Frampton, and Iñigo Gurruchaga are careful not to claim that their study offers an alternative model for democracies dealing with such problems, they provide such a detailed and thorough deconstruction of the prevailing narrative—when it comes to negotiations with both the IRA and the Basque Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA)—that it is difficult not to conclude that the "talk first, guns later" strategy has things pretty much in reverse.

The "troubles" in Northern Ireland were rooted in the fact that the Protestant majority had ruled the roost in a manner that left minority Roman Catholics believing they had held the short end of the stick, politically and economically, for decades. Add to this discontent an Irish nationalism that dreamed of incorporating Ulster into the Republic of Ireland, and a late '60s international scene in which civil rights and political reform movements were splintering into more radical efforts, and you have the combustible mix leading to the violence that broke out in Northern Ireland in 1968-69.

The government, then headed by Labour prime minister Harold Wilson, reacted as one might expect. The British Army was sent in to restore order. Employing an array of security tools borrowed from its days policing more difficult parts of the Empire, the British military may have created sympathy for the republican cause and given extremists within the IRA the excuse to create an even more radical and vio-

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lent movement, the Provisional IRA. For the next 30 years it would be the "Provos" who would use terrorism as their tool of choice in an effort to force the creation of a unified Irish state.

By 1972 the British government, now under the leadership of Conservative Edward Heath, had deepened its role in Northern Ireland, suspended local governance, and implemented direct rule from London. Now in opposition, Harold Wilson decided to meet secretly with the Provisional IRA in Dublin, overturning the oft-stated tenet that London would never talk to the terrorists. Apparently believing this was an indirect approach by the government, the Provo leadership reached out directly to the Tory government.

Initially, Heath rejected the idea of a meeting; but following the bombing of the Guildhall in Londonderry in June, London reversed course and agreed to sit down with the IRA as well. That clandestine meeting produced nothing concrete in terms of cease-fires or a potential program for reconciliation. But according to *Talking to Terrorists*, it did have one decisive result. It gave the Provos the sense that the British were on the ropes: "Consequently, the July 1972 meeting—which occurred in the context of a bitter and apparently escalating IRA insurgency—fueled the republican sense 'one more push' might be enough to force the British to reconsider its position in Northern Ireland" and withdraw.

Although the IRA was beginning to suffer serious losses as a result of internments and the increased capacity of British intelligence to penetrate its ranks, and was worried about the movement's long-term prospects, London seemed to be in an even more desperate state—and showed it. With all kinds of serious domestic and economic problems to face, Harold Wilson, having returned to 10 Downing Street in 1974, was more than willing to talk to the IRA and, more important, allow his own interlocutors to signal considerable ambiguity on his government's commitment to staying in Northern Ireland.

All of this furnished the IRA with substantial incentive to ratchet up the pressure in the short term, which it did during 1974-1975 with a terrorist bombing campaign aimed at England itself. With uncertainty on Downing Street, and no obvious strategy for resolving the conflict coming from Whitehall, the British public's appetite for making a go of it in Northern Ireland disappeared. By late 1975, some two-thirds of the British public wanted the troops out of Northern Ireland altogether.

As *Talking to Terrorists* notes, however, it was precisely at this darkest moment that the British government began to develop a strategy that would eventually lead to today's success. Ironically, this was driven in part by the very idea that the British might actually *leave* Northern Ireland: Once on the table for consideration, both Dublin and London were forced to consider the possible ramifications of doing so. Neither capital was sure that all hell wouldn't break loose once the British stepped aside—probably forcing London to intervene yet again, this time in even less favorable circumstances.

At that point, sounder minds in Whitehall came to see that they had to stop reacting to events, develop a comprehensive political and security strategy, and be willing to sustain the effort for the long haul.

Now, in truth, and as this volume makes evident in rich detail, the British government's execution of this strategy was hardly pretty or consistent, and IRA terrorism would continue for another two decades. But in reality, and with a degree of hindsight, the security and political policies put in place by London after the mid-1970s cleared a path to what exists today: a Northern Ireland governed by consent, with more institutional protections for the minority, and parties that have been demilitarized.

Of particular importance was the growing sophistication of the British security effort. While it is true that London pulled the army off the streets in Northern Ireland, this was not the same (as some have suggested) as abandoning a security-first agenda. With retrained police on the beat, the use of special forces to take down IRA operatives, and an increased capacity to penetrate the inner ranks of the IRA itself, the war against the Provos was slowly but surely won, street-by-street, pub-by-pub, cell-by-cell. And crucially, as the book argues, the IRA knew it.

Martin McGuinness, Bill Clinton, Gerry Adams, 2000

POOL / REUTERS

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By the early 1990s it was time, as one republican strategist put it, for the IRA to "cash in" its chips. As a result, when talks resumed between the government and the IRA, they did so on fundamentally different terms than those that had obtained in the early 1970s. On this point, *Talking to Terrorists* diverges most clearly from the conventional narrative, which has the British government—and a Conservative government at that—finally realizing that it could not defeat the IRA and would have to negotiate with it. While Margaret Thatcher, and later John Major, were willing "to open the door . . . to negotiations," the terms for republicans' walking through it were an end to violence and acceptance of the principle that whatever new political arrangement was constructed for Northern Ireland, it would rest on the consent of the people.

Given the Protestant majority in Ulster, this second condition meant that a united Ireland was effectively off the negotiating table. As the authors note, by accepting these two conditions for talks, "the IRA would effectively be acceding to a reality against which it had fought for 30 years." No more terrorism, no all-of-Ireland state.

Of course, concluding a deal would take another decade, a period marked by IRA foot-dragging, Labour missteps in the final stages of negotiations, and the sometimes useful, sometimes not interventions of American administrations. In reality, the final political-constitutional settlement was not all that different from what had been proposed by the British in the early 1970s, a point noted in the book. But the difference was that earlier strategic and tactical incoherence in London had given the IRA life, and it was not until the Provos were (as one key participant noted) "prepared to consider throwing in the towel," that an accord was finally reached.

A little less than a third of *Talking to Terrorists* is devoted to a case study of Spain's decades-long conflict with the Basque terrorist group, ETA. In existence since the late 1950s, ETA turned, like the IRA, to violence and terrorism in the late 1960s, with a goal of forcing the Spanish government to grant the Basque region independence from Madrid. By contrast with Northern Ireland, no peace agreement has ever been close to being finalized. But this has not been for lack of trying: Over the years the Spanish government has applied a mixture of carrots and sticks, but with some exceptions, has not done so coherently.

In the beginning, the major obstacle Madrid faced in dealing with ETA was the fact that, until 1975, Spain was ruled by Francisco Franco, giving the ETA something of the patina of "freedom fighters." This, in turn, allowed the French government to ignore the fact that its territory—akin to how the Irish government initially looked upon the IRA—was being used by the ETA as a logistics, planning, and command safe haven. Over time, this has changed, as Spain has become a democracy and French security cooperation with the Spanish government has increased. Indeed, one of the more remarkable elements of the fight against ETA is just how many body blows it has taken over the past two decades from Spanish and French police and intelligence efforts—and lives to fight on.

Sounder minds in Whitehall came to see that they had to stop reacting to events, develop a comprehensive political and security strategy, and be willing to sustain the effort for the long haul.

A key reason for the ETA's intransigence is that, for the past two decades, successive leftist governments in Madrid have decided to talk to ETA at the least opportune times. Bombs go off, people die, and new "dialogues" are undertaken. Kidnappings take place, and talks start up again. Barcelona was hosting the Olympics: Best to start a new outreach beforehand.

As a result, time and again, ETA has been led to believe that terrorism might just pay off. The lone exception to this behavior was the presidency of José María Aznar, who increased the political, legal, and security pressures on ETA and raised cooperation with the French. Only in 1998, when the ETA put forward, in conjunction with other Basque political parties, its own road map for solving the conflict and announced a cease-fire, did Aznar signal his government's willingness to begin talks. But this self-conscious effort by ETA to mimic the Good Friday agreement, reached that year among the various parties in Northern Ireland, was bound to fail.

It was bound to fail precisely because it assumed, as conventional accounts of the Irish peace process put it, that resolution of the conflict rested on the assumption that "neither [the British government nor the IRA] could win." Accordingly, the ETA negotiating position was bound to overestimate what the Spanish government was willing to accept. So the fault lies less with the Spanish government's position than with a misreading of the underlying realities of how the reconciliation in Northern Ireland came about.

With talks going nowhere, Madrid kept its foot to the pedal on the political and security fronts, and by 2003 ETA operations had become nearly negligible in terms of their effect on daily life in Spain. During the first three months of 2004, for example, ETA was unable to pull off a single attack, and there were indications that some of its members had concluded that the armed effort was not succeeding. In short, the tide might well have been turning.

In the wake of the deadly Islamist terror bombings in Madrid, however, Aznar's successor was defeated in his party's bid for a third term by the

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Socialist José Luis Zapatero. Zapatero and the Socialists entered office on a platform that included support for Catalonian autonomy and devolution of power to the regions. Although seemingly careful never to cross the line of being open to Basque independence, Zapatero's campaign pledges almost surely led ETA to believe they were once again on the right side of history.

Equally problematic, Zapatero stated that one of the lessons he gleaned from Tony Blair's experience in dealing with Northern Ireland was that "[the British] always kept a channel of communications open." As Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga pointedly note, "To many, it seemed as if the Prime Minister had opened the latest chapter in the Spanish state's engagement with ETA by effectively telling the organization that even if it killed again, dialogue would not be broken off."

With ETA misreading what the government was willing to concede, it's no surprise that the talks went nowhere. It's also no surprise that ETA, frustrated with the lack of progress, struck once again: On December 30, 2006, they used a bomb to destroy a car park at Madrid's new airport, killing two and injuring dozens. Predictably, both Tony Blair and Gerry Adams, the longtime political face of the IRA, weighed in to advise the Spanish government that it was still incumbent they "listen to ETA."

Go to almost any European capital for talks with foreign ministry and defense officials, or most Washington think-tank discussions about Afghanistan, for that matter, and you will almost certainly hear this: "No government can hope to defeat an insurgency by killing and capturing its way to victory." At one level, the point is obviously true, and no serious analyst thinks otherwise. An effective counterinsurgency strategy requires a comprehensive set of tools that involves hard and soft power, properly applied to a very concrete set of country conditions.

But the key is how those tools are applied—and when.

In truth, when somebody says an insurgency can't be beat by force of arms, what they usually mean is: We think efforts toward reconciliation are too low a priority, and that getting terrorists/insurgents to end their military efforts is more important—more urgent than the long, hard slog of rebuilding a state and securing the population. For such people, the British experience in Northern Ireland remains sacrosanct.

It's no surprise, then, that Michael Semple, who was tossed out of Afghanistan for talking to the Taliban, has just coauthored a piece in *Foreign Affairs* ("Flipping the Taliban: How to Win in Afghanistan") which argues precisely that: "Washington should substitute the model of the British experience in Northern Ireland for the Soviet one in Afghanistan." Semple is not oblivious to the need for more troops, but claims it "will have a lasting impact only if accompanied by . . . a committed effort to persuade large groups of Taliban fighters to put down their arms and give up the fight."

Noting that the United States was able to convert thousands of Iraqi Sunnis from insurgents to supporters of the government, Semple, drawing on his own knowledge of the Taliban, argues that many (if not most) of the Taliban commanders can be "flipped" into joining forces with the government: "In Afghanistan," he writes, "battles have often been decided less by fighting than by defections. Changing sides, realigning, flipping . . . is the Afghan way of war."

What is required, according to Semple, is a serious effort by the government in Kabul "on striking deals with important insurgent networks rather than with average fighters," and a clear commitment on the part of America and our allies to getting out as the process of reconciliation progresses. And reconciliation "should start before the pursuit of any comprehensive settlement."

Yet if the authors of *Talking to Terrorists* are correct in their reading of the efforts by British and Spanish governments at reconciling their own insurgencies to the existing political order, then Semple's road map is unlikely to lead to either stability or peace. Indeed, it is the very fact that Afghanistan's insurgent commanders have a history of "flipping" at any sign of a change in the balance of power that makes a lasting reconciliation unlikely until and unless they have no real alternatives. This is especially true if the principles for a comprehensive settlement are left unsettled, as Semple suggests.

At best, Semple's advice may lead to some short-term gains, but it plants the seeds for reconciliation's own undoing. If we have learned nothing else from the experience of the Anbar Awakening in Iraq, it's that it only occurred because the Sunnis found themselves in the impossible strategic situation of simultaneously fighting al Qaeda *and* Iraqi and American forces, they had a constitutional alternative that promised a substantial level of local self-governance, and they came to believe that the American troop surge could make their rejection of al Qaeda a realistic alternative.

In short, the conditions for "flipping" insurgent leaders and their followers are far more complex and onerous than Semple and the conventional wisdom about Northern Ireland care to admit.

Talking to Terrorists is modest in its claims. It "is not intended to provide a rigid model or template" for governments dealing with insurgencies and terrorists. But there are three policy points that the book's two case studies certainly emphasize. First, it seems inevitable that democratic governments will, at some point, get around to talking to their adversaries, the insurgents. Second, "constructive ambiguity" about the political principles guiding a final settlement may be useful for getting people seated at a table, but it is counterproductive in reaching a final accord. And finally, and most important, if talking to terrorists is inevitable, there is "a crucial qualitative difference between talking to terrorists who are the crest of a wave . . . and talking to terrorists who have been made to realize that their aims are unattainable by violent means." ♦

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Jazz by the Book

Up the river from New Orleans, and into the concert halls. **BY TED GIOIA**

Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, 1947

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

When I was 17 years old and newly arrived on my college campus, I scandalized the department of music by playing "Maple Leaf Rag" at my piano audition. Back then, there were no professors of jazz or professors of the blues at Stanford—and darn few anywhere else. My friend, the late Grover Sales, summed it up best when he said that, in jazz, "the 'professor' was what they called the piano player in the whorehouse."

As a result of this neglect, the early history of African-American music was mostly preserved by fans, not academics. They usually did this without grants or institutional support. And when a few of them did get into positions of influence—as did Alan Lomax or John Hammond—the amount of good they could do for the music was little short of amazing. Hammond and Lomax, for example, played a key role in advancing the careers of Billie Holiday, Leadbelly, Count Basie, Son House, Aretha Franklin, Teddy Wilson, and George Benson—in addition to helping white artists such as Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and Benny Goodman.

New Orleans Style and the Writing of American Jazz History
by Bruce Boyd Raeburn
Michigan, 352 pp., $26.95

Ellington Uptown
Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson and the Birth of Concert Jazz
by John Howland
Michigan, 360 pp., $28.95

You would think that scholars today would be grateful for the amateurs who worked tirelessly to preserve the music's history in the days when academics were missing in action. Yet the exact opposite is the case. Numerous books have come out in recent years belittling or attacking the efforts of the first generation of record collectors, researchers, and historians. Recent studies by Bruce Nemerov, Robert Gordon, Marybeth Hamilton, and others have set the tone for this game of revisionism. And what could be more satisfying to a certain mindset than to take these white males who dared to preserve black music and show that their seemingly disinterested advocacy was actually driven by (in Marybeth Hamilton's words) their "fears and obsessions."

Given this prevailing tone, it's refreshing to read Bruce Boyd Raeburn's *New Orleans Style and the Writing of American Jazz History*. Raeburn offers a fair and compassionate account of the early jazz researchers who rescued the story of early jazz from oblivion—and sometimes rescued the musicians themselves. For advocates such as Bill Russell and Gene Williams, rediscovering New Orleans music sometimes required them to lend money to old players, put up musicians at their apartment, look after them when they were ill, bury them when they were dead. Needless to say, you don't get tenure for these activities, none of which shows up on the *curriculum vitae*.

Who were these people who showed such commitment to African-American music? Yes, they were white and usually male (although not always, as Raeburn makes clear in his look at the women who loved early jazz). Some got started as record collectors, others were writers or discographers, and a few were musicians themselves. But they shared a passion for jazz. Sometimes they showed too much passion, and Raeburn does an admirable job of bringing to life the disputes and grievances of the middle years of the 20th century when traditional, swing, and modern camps fought to impose their definitions on the form.

The marvel was that a consensus view eventually emerged, one that could find a place of honor for all parties involved. The end result was, above all, a historical perspective that acknowledged New Orleans as the center from which everything else flowed. To this day, the Crescent City is commemorated as the birthplace of

Ted Gioia is the author, most recently, of The Birth and Death of Cool *and the editor of www.jazz.com.*

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jazz—rightly, in my opinion—but this preeminence only gradually emerged from the disputes and conflicting theories of the postwar years. As late as 1957 Leonard Feather could assert that "jazz was not born in New Orleans," and though his evidence was meager, his position testified to the last lingering desire of the modernists to put the traditionalists in their place.

Raeburn's skill and fairness in navigating through this tale is remarkable—even more remarkable when one considers that the author's father Boyd Raeburn (1913-1966) was a modernist bandleader much celebrated by the progressive critics of the day. Yet the son deals evenhandedly with every participant, and when he comes down with a firm verdict, it is invariably judicious and compelling. He plays no favorites, and emerges as a trustworthy guide to a subject usually treated with polemic and posturing.

I especially like his advocacy of what he calls the "fun factor" in the music. In addition to opinions and ideologies, he suggests, "jazz should also be fun, rooted as it must be in a sense of play that is basic to human experience." He shows that "the answer to the riddle of New Orleans style, the secret of its success as a 'good time' music, was the way in which it brought people together." Its trademarks were "liberty, equality, fraternity, and *fun*."

This probably makes sense to the casual listener or New Orleans tourist, but they might be surprised at how often it is forgotten within the jazz world these days.

New Orleans Jazz and the Writing of American Jazz History focuses on early jazz researchers. John Howland's *Ellington Uptown*, also from the University of Michigan Press, looks at a handful of important early performers and composers. But though Howland expresses, in the introduction, his "hope that the music discussed in these pages will be heard," the dry exegesis he employs in the next 300 pages will give few readers much reason to check out the works under discussion.

Howland focuses on the concert jazz tradition, in which artists such as Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, Paul Whiteman, and others tried to incorporate elements of classical music into their performances, and present longer works that deviated from the simple song structures of early jazz. Howland is thorough in his formal analysis, counting the measures and comparing thematic material from different sources with meticulous care. Yet again and again he seems reluctant to make any value judgments unless he can quote an outside source—and then he almost immediately starts backtracking from whatever verdict he just cited.

Alan Lomax, 1941

Surely he realizes that much of the music he is analyzing is on the brink of disappearing from the repertoire. The only decent CD release of James P. Johnson's concert works recently went out of print, the Carnegie Hall concerts by Ellington in the 1940s are much more difficult to find than they once were, and I have never seen a comprehensive CD set of Whiteman's recordings. Much of this music is excellent, and some of it ranks among the finest flowering of jazz.

In short, it is worth going to the trouble of tracking it down. But you wouldn't get much impetus to do that from Howland's dry and schematic approach, which treats these works with as much passion as if he were dealing with actuarial tables or Babylonian cuneiform.

Yet *Ellington Uptown* is not without its merits, especially for the specialist who already knows these works. Howland's attempt to show the connections between Ellington and Whiteman will be an eye-opener to jazz insiders, who tend to see these two figures as diametrically opposed to each other. Howland is also good at tracing the mentor/disciple relationships within the black community, as well as the attitudes and obstacles that often prevented jazz musicians from playing a larger role in the Harlem Renaissance.

On the other hand, I am puzzled to see him offer a long list of later musicians who were influenced by the concert jazz tradition—offering names such as Phil Spector, Burt Bacharach, and Kanye West—and yet not mentioning Wynton Marsalis, whose Pulitzer Prize-winning work *Blood on the Fields* is clearly the most significant modern-day extension of this approach.

Yet whether we are dealing with the New Orleans tradition covered by Raeburn, or the Harlem masters dealt with by Howland, scholarship these days may be less important than preservation and advocacy. I have noticed that many jazz fans (and even many critics) of the current generation avoid listening to music that was recorded before the late 1950s, when high fidelity arrived on the scene. They have no patience for listening to the older recordings.

What a shame! Some of the greatest musical moments in the history of jazz came on those old 78s, and it is worth accepting the scratchy surface noise and one-dimensional sound quality to savor them. I wish each of these books came with a CD (or even two CDs), but don't let that stop you from filling in the gaps yourself. Readers will enjoy these books all the more if they track down the soundtracks to the stories they relate. ♦

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Picture Perfect

The first Grand Tour with color film in the cameras.

BY JAMES F.X. O'GARA

'Reims, France, 1917' by Fernand Cuville

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

In a passage in his *Discourse on Method* that echoes the first lines of the *Odyssey*, Descartes describes passing his youth "visiting courts and armies, mixing with people of diverse temperaments and ranks, gathering various experiences, testing myself in the situations which fortune offered me, and at all times reflecting upon whatever came my way so as to derive some profit from it."

Descartes called this studying the "great book of the world." At the turn of the 20th century, a well-to-do Frenchman with that same gallic fixation on systematizing decided to create his own great book of the world, bankrolling photographers to travel the world to document cultures and civilizations from China to Cambodia using the spanking new technology of color film.

The Dawn of the Color Photograph
Albert Kahn's Archives of the Planet
by David Okuefuna
Princeton, 336 pp., $49.50

That man, about whom we hear a great deal in this occasionally apple-polishing volume, is Albert Kahn. The project he undertook is known as the Archives of the Planet. "Is" because the archives still exist, at Kahn's former estate in Boulogne-Billancourt just outside the Paris *périphérique*, where Kahn lived out his days, expiring in 1940 shortly after the arrival of German troops.

Kahn's hope had been to create a contribution to human knowledge, but also to mutual understanding, and eventually to world peace. In a sort of cosmic joke, this philanthropist and pacifist embarked on his quest shortly before the outbreak of the Great War and widespread upheaval in the Middle East.

He commissioned photographers (*opérateurs*) over a period of two decades, sending them off to remote corners of the world, weighted down with hundreds of pounds of photographic apparatus, to tangle with larcenous customs officials and vexatious colonial overseers. The British in China come in for special mention.

What his photographers accomplished is remarkable. First, their photographs, or "autochromes," are genuinely beautiful. The autochrome process used large sheets of film covered with tens of millions of grains of dyed potato starch, an improbable system that nevertheless yielded beautiful reds and greens.

Second, his photographers went everywhere. Not just obvious waypoints like Beijing but also Mongolia and Cambodia. Not just New York and Montreal, but also Niagara Falls and Calgary. Not just Baghdad (where they photographed Armenian orphans produced in numbers by the 1915 genocide), but also clerics in Najaf, Kurds in Zakho, and mullahs in Shiraz. A schoolyard in Hamadan, in latter-day Iran, overflows with Jewish schoolgirls.

The *opérateurs* made it to Cairo and the pyramids of Giza, but also to more challenging destinations such as Aleppo and Hama. The accomplishment is all the more amazing in that they did it all with cameras the size of an Easter ham and slower to reload than a flintlock rifle.

In the Bekaa Valley, Kahn's photographers captured British soldiers preparing to relinquish their responsibilities to the French, who had picked up new mandates in Lebanon and Syria at Versailles. For their part, the British were heading off to assume new mandates in Iraq, Palestine, and Jordan. In this, as in so many other instances in this volume, Kahn's photographers have stumbled onto a historical pivot point, the sort of innocent but pregnant image that reminds one of nothing so much as the third-grade class pictures of a serial killer. (It only *looks* like a bunch of British soldiers milling around on a dusty road.)

James F.X. O'Gara is a Washington-based photographer whose most recent exhibit was of migrant workers in Cairo's Manshiet Nasr neighborhood.

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Photography may be low art to some, but it has an edge on writing in the truth-telling department. Thucydides wrote of the Thracians "bursting into Mycalessus" during the Peloponnesian War, and "sparing neither youth nor age but killing all they fell in with, one after the other, children and women, and even beasts of burden." Thucydides intended his book to be "a monument for all time," and indeed it is, but Albert Kahn has pictures. His photographer Frédéric Gadmer was on hand to document the aftermath of the sack of Smyrna, with the loss of 120,000 souls. Photographs such as those taken by Gadmer of the comprehensive devastation visited on that ancient Mediterranean city by the Turks have a credibility that written accounts of other atrocities necessarily lack.

Kahn's *opérateurs* were present at so many other critical moments. In author David Okefuna's words:

> Kahn's cameras recorded reactions in Palestine to the visit by British Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, who had committed Britain to support the creation of a Jewish homeland. His photographers visited Persia (now Iran) just after the military coup that brought the new shah to power; and they captured life in Afghanistan in the years after the third Anglo-Afghan war.

They also witnessed the beginning of Iraq's oil economy. In the main, they witnessed the unwinding of the Ottoman Empire.

You can hardly read this collection without being conscious of the remarkable research effort involved in bringing together hundreds of thinly documented photos and attempting to write informative captions for each. One wonders how long it took the author to figure out that a particular building in Venice would later become a hotel and play host to Ernest Hemingway, or that the costume of one Swedish woman marks her as a denizen of Rättvik, not nearby Leksand, or that the indigenous Sami women of Lapland began to wear more colorful clothes in the 19th century with the advent of cheaper dyes.

The author introduces each part of the world with a concise essay, making the overall effect somewhat like an endless (but interesting) *National Geographic* article, or Robert Flaherty film set down on paper. As with *National Geographic*, the writing is good but sometimes veers into U.N.-speak, as when the author praises the work of photographer Frédéric Gadmer in the proud and ancient African kingdom of Dahomey: "[These photographs] bequeath an unswervingly candid yet consistently sympathetic picture of African life at a time when corrosively racist mythologies that denied the humanity of Africans were colonizing the mental environment of the West."

Even today, color photography is not for everyone, and the past, as is well known, happened in black and white, even the recent past: Nobody wants to see a color shot of Buddy Holly on their CD or color footage of James Meredith grimacing in pain after being shot on Highway 51. This lends many of Kahn's images a vaguely unsettling quality, especially images likely to resonate with Western readers such as the destruction of Reims, or aviators preparing to take their biplane on a surveillance mission over the Somme.

This is a book less about photography than about a kindly philanthropist who set out to increase human understanding and found, instead, war and rumors of war. ♦

The Golden Door

Ground zero in the 'third wave' of immigration.

BY JAMES M. BANNER JR.

Ask most Americans what makes the United States distinctive, and what Americans have to teach the world, and they'll answer, "democracy."

That's not wrong; it's just partial. The people of Western Europe, Japan, and many other nations have as much claim as we do to being able to provide examples of democracy and representative government to those in need or want of examples. But anyone who's lived or spent any time abroad can tell you where the United States stands out, or at least has few peers. It has gone farthest in creating that most fragile of civic constructs: a diverse and open society.

Yet getting to such diversity has not been easy or quick, nor is the job ever done. Creating a nation of the people of the entire world who live in relative peace with each other on grounds of legal and civic equality requires flexible laws and institutions, adaptive governments, and perhaps, above all, acceptance of the always-unresolved tensions that stem from living alongside those from whom we differ.

American Passage
The History of Ellis Island
by Vincent J. Cannato
Harper, 496 pp., $27.99

If the United States is farther along in these respects than most other nations, it's because Americans have more experience than most others in creating a country composed of individuals from every corner of the globe. You get a sense of the difficulties in knitting together such a people of peoples in this spirited history of the third of four great phases of voluntary (that is, of nonslave) immigration into what is now the United States.

The colonial era, when Europeans first settled North America, inaugurated American immigration history. The second and largely forgotten stage of European peopling of the continent

James M. Banner Jr. is a historian in Washington and cofounder of the National History Center.

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commenced after 1815 and continued through the Civil War. Composed largely of northern Europeans, this wave of settlers filled the United States with substantial new populations of Irish and Germans, as well as with more people from the British Isles. Vincent Cannato takes up the story when the third wave of immigrants, this one composed largely of people from eastern and southern Europe, began to enter the nation. It's principally the story of the 12 million who arrived on American shores through Ellis Island in New York Harbor.

Even if not always the inspirational story many would like it to be, the tale that unfolded in a few buildings on a tiny piece of land surrounded by water is a saga central to the nation's history and idea of itself. It's also part of the history of the United States as a sovereign nation, for no nation-state has dominion over its own territory unless it can control its borders, and that has never proven easy here.

The story of Ellis Island also belongs to the history of the growth of government itself, for the system used at the nation's gates to evaluate the fitness of immigrants for American life, and to record their entry into the United States, constituted one of the earliest large-scale programs (exceeded only by the Postal Service and Civil War military forces) maintained by the federal government. And as Cannato points out, efforts to control the quality, if not the number, of immigrants fit well within the progressive impulse to end child labor, reduce the political sway of corrupt urban political machines, control the trusts, and improve the lot of the poor. Controlling immigration could be seen by the immigrants' backers, as well as their detractors, as a way of improving American life.

Ellis Island was the center of that effort. Long before the restrictionist legislation of 1924 that put an effective end to mass immigration for 40 years, the federal government sought to screen immigrants for their physical and mental health and to assure itself that an immigrant would not become a "public charge"—that is, not able to find work. The emergence of Europe's downtrodden from their cramped steerage berths into the scrutinizing gaze of immigration officers and physicians in New York harbor has been told so many times around family hearths and in history texts that Ellis Island now stands as a symbol of both the nation's promise and the anxieties immigration still provokes.

Yet contrary to widely held belief, the millions of immigrants who disembarked there—80 percent of those entering the United States between 1892, when Ellis Island opened, and 1954, when it closed—were rarely held long in confinement or subjected to rough treatment. Most remained on Ellis Island for only a few hours; only 2 percent were denied entry into the United States.

For most, the cavernous spaces we now can tour released their residents quickly and efficiently into American life after only the most cursory interview and informal medical assay. While inspectors looked for "undesirables" who were "feeble-minded" or showed "moral turpitude" (code terms for evidence of political radicalism, former prostitution, or criminality), they found comparatively few. In the larger scheme of things, most made it through the net easily, and the United States, despite the best efforts of many fearful and unwelcoming people, became more Jewish and Catholic, more eastern and southern European, than it had been before.

To relate what he calls this "biography . . . of a place," Cannato strips Ellis Island of the romance and myths long attached to it. The result is a deeply researched and lively work, as much a history of tragedy, bribery, patronage, nativism, and anti-Semitism as it is of civic service, idealism, aspiration, and care. Where other historians would have been tempted, in the academic conventions of our era, to situate the history of Ellis Island within genealogies of "whiteness studies," or the construction of memory, Cannato takes a more direct, narrative approach. In doing so, he brings alive many aspects of the history overlooked by earlier historians.

German family at Ellis Island, 1905

LEWIS W. HINE / GETTY IMAGES

Few, for example, will have heard of William Williams, director of Ellis Island in the early years of the 20th century. A shrewd political operator as well as a representative type of the Mugwump Anglo male, Williams sought to limit the inflow of "new" immigrants—those who would reduce, as they eventually did, the sway of "old stock" Americans (that is, those whose roots were in northern Europe). That his efforts were to little avail should not obscure the fact that his views were consonant with those of many other Americans already here.

It is sobering to read the words of the distinguished and influential sociologist

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E. A. Ross to the effect that "on the physical side the Hebrew are the polar opposites of our pioneer breed. Not only are they undersized and weak-muscled, but they shun bodily activity and are exceedingly sensitive to pain." It was also Ross who wished to raise a monument "to the American Pioneering Breed, the Victim of too much Humanitarianism and too little common sense." Such views were what passed for wisdom in the parlors of the polite and professorial in those days and what led, by 1894, to the founding of the Immigration Restriction League.

Not surprisingly, momentary realities frequently strengthened such prejudice. During the Red Scare that followed World War I, Ellis Island saw its population of alien radicals and "Reds," many of them like the anarchist Emma Goldman subsequently deported, soar. And during the next world war the island again became the temporary home for those suspected of disloyalty. One was the great operatic bass Ezio Pinza, imprisoned there in 1942 for three months for his patriotic support of his distressed Italian homeland. Little could he then know that, a few years later, he would take Broadway by storm in a musical about another island and eventually win a Tony Award for his performance in the role of *South Pacific*'s Emile de Becque.

As so often in the history of American immigration, individual achievement made a mockery of restrictionist efforts.

As Cannato is at pains to relate, stubborn reality—an open door, human desperation, individual aspiration toward betterment, and the need for the labor of arm and mind—usually rendered restrictionist thinking and acts largely irrelevant. If the "science" of eugenics, racial and ethnic prejudice, political fears, and status anxieties colored the nation's immigration history during Ellis Island's heyday, the stories that Cannato has mined from the archives lend that history a larger, personal touch.

We're not surprised that Emma Goldman called Ellis Island "the worst dump I ever stayed in." But we also learn how immigration regulations clashed with life. How were officials, many of them more tender-minded than Williams, to resolve the tragic predicament of a large family, some of whose members were ill: Send them all home or, dividing the healthy from the sick, admit some and send the rest packing?

And we see once again how little sway presidents often have over the nation's affairs. Three chief executives—Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson—actually visited the island. Taft was present at one applicant's hearing and urged that the applicant be admitted. His appeal was heard—then denied. Yet Taft represented the generally permissive attitude that Ellis Island's officials, typical of the majority of Americans, brought to their responsibilities.

Eye examinations, 1910

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

"It is hard," Cannato remarks, "to describe Ellis Island as a restrictionist nightmare."

Even after the center closed for good in 1954, it remained a political, ideological, and historical football, and the government almost sold off the island for private development. Since it opened as a tourist center in 1990, it has become a shrine to many, a sore point to others. Even those whose forebears never set foot on the island's shores take it (understandably, in Cannato's view) as symbolic of the travails of immigration and adaptation to a new land—therefore a shrine to the ancestors of us all, save native Americans and African Americans.

But Cannato is less forgiving of those, both left and right, who he believes have gone overboard in their condemnation of Ellis Island piety. John Hope Franklin, for instance, with uncharacteristic lack of empathy, dismissed the island's symbolism as having "nothing to do with me." Yes, but it has much to do with Americans defined as a distinct people. And I'm confident that my late friend and colleague would have conceded the point if I'd asked him whether his comment means that the slavery of his ancestors had nothing to do with me.

In a similar vein, Samuel P. Huntington strained hard to distinguish his Anglo-Saxon ancestors from more recent arrivals by terming his forebears settlers, not immigrants. Yes, but they, too, were seeking better futures, escaping European troubles, and encountering a wilderness as bewildering as any city later on. And I would have asked him whether my German great-grandfather, an immigrant founder of orthopedic medicine in the United States, wasn't as worthy for his pioneering medicine as Huntington's pioneering ancestors—if, that is, they were worthy people to begin with.

While not openly tipping his hand, Cannato is clearly impatient with these arguments. He takes Ellis Island—both the historical immigration entry point that can be depicted and evaluated for what it was and the "national shrine" (Cannato's term) that the restored site has become—as symbolic of the American nation's continuing, complex relationship to new people arriving on its

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shores. In keeping with his determination to take seriously the site's significance to so many, he brushes aside critics who see it as nothing more than a theme park.

His sympathies, as well as his fidelity to historical fact, also provide one of the book's major surprises: that it was the immigrants themselves (and not so many of them at that) rather than prejudiced or lazy immigration officials who changed their surnames to ones more consonant with shorter, less "foreign-sounding" American names. In Cannato's telling, the immigrants retained the initiative and their individuality most of the time.

Surely he is correct that "the battle over the status of immigrants in a globalized world where borders are increasingly fuzzy will only grow more heated." And there can be little doubt that immigration into the United States—and Canada, which we too often forget has also largely been peopled by those from across the seas—will remain the aspiration of many more millions of people until the rest of the world gets its house in better order. We differ about the significance of Ellis Island because we're in the midst of intense debates about the value and wisdom of immigration in our own era—since 1965, the fourth great era of population inflows. Those differences among us are unlikely soon to be stilled, or Ellis Island to lose its symbolic status in our never-ending effort to define ourselves as a people.

Cannato's wide-ranging history only confirms what we know of our own day. Debates about immigration are never purely about the nation's composition. Instead, they arouse hopes, fears, and attitudes rooted in religion, history, ethnicity, politics, and—never to be forgotten—brute fact. In this era of environmental crisis, for example, one has to ask how long a nation growing short on water, clean air, and other resources can go on absorbing more people, to say nothing of bearing more children on our own. It is a tribute to Vincent Cannato's *American Passage* that it shows how such concerns have never been far from Americans' minds. ♦

Right Stuff

What does it mean to be an American conservative?

BY STEVEN F. HAYWARD

Patrick Allitt has succeeded admirably in his objective of producing a compact survey of American conservative thought that will be useful to students and general readers. *The Conservatives* features excellent succinct summaries of key conservative thinkers, going back to the Founding era, ably conveying along the way the inconsistencies and internal divisions on the right. If *The Conservatives* is in some way unsatisfying, it is not Allitt's fault; the different strains of conservative thought are difficult or impossible to reconcile. The dynamic tension among conservatives is the secret of the right's success, but is hard to capture in a chronological narrative, and remains baffling to observers on the left.

The Conservatives
Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History
by Patrick Allitt
Yale, 336 pp., $35

The virtue of Allitt's book is its focus on American conservatism, which is distinct from European conservatism even as it draws upon European sources. Traditionalist conservatives of the Russell Kirk variety have always tried to implant Old World, Burkean-style conservatism on these shores, but it fits as insecurely as a bowler hat on a sprinter for the simple reason Allitt grasps near the middle of his account: "American conservatism has always had a paradoxical element, entailing a defense of a revolutionary achievement."

The American Revolution has been a stumbling block for some conservatives, who either deny its revolutionary character, or try to portray it as being in essential continuity with British or European political thought. (Hence Kirk's dislike of the Declaration of Independence, for example.) James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, both rightly considered 18th-century liberals, emerge in Allitt's account as "conservative innovators"—only in America would such a phrase not be considered an oxymoron—and *The Federalist*, according to Allitt, should be considered "the new nation's first conservative classic."

The inconsistency and internal divisions among American conservatives derive, Allitt thinks, from a general antitheoretical approach to the world; conservatism is more "an attitude to social and political change that . . . puts more faith in the lessons of history than in the abstractions of political philosophy." But this is another paradox: At some point, deference to history becomes an abstraction. Although Allitt discerns a suspicion of democracy and equality, and constant worry about the fragility of civil society, as recurrent themes across the broad spectrum of conservatives, his narrative offers many exceptions and contradictions of even these lowest common denominators. The social and political split between the North and South, culminating in the Civil War, is obviously the largest stumbling block to a coherent or consistent account of American conservatism. Allitt offers good accounts of the divergent streams of antebellum Northern and Southern conservatism, both suspicious of populism and skeptical of democracy. Allitt subtly conveys the intellectual

Steven F. Hayward, the F.K. Weyerhaeuser fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author, most recently, of The Age of Reagan: The Conservative Counter-Revolution, 1980-1989.

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and political problems of Southern conservatism, as well as the overweening elitism of some strands of Northern conservatism. There is no escaping, however, that the Civil War was "an encounter of two incompatible conservatisms."

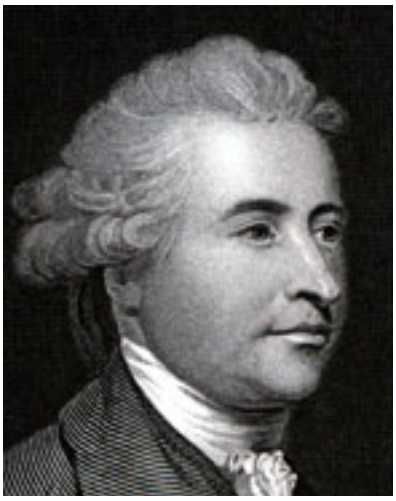
While Allitt strives to present an unbiased or objective view of the conservative landscape, he does not shrink from making some judgment calls that will not command universal assent. He offers a long account of why "Lincoln deserves a place in the American conservative pantheon" because, in preserving the Union, Lincoln succeeded "in this most basic of all conservative tasks" while acknowledging that many conservatives (mostly southerners) then and now vehemently reject Lincoln's company.

Many more conservatives will rightly disagree with Allitt's inclusion of Theodore Roosevelt in the conservative pantheon, merely on account of his elitism, opposition to radicals, utopians, and pacifists, and his belief in the value of human struggle. T.R.'s large and admirable personality should not distract us from his anti-conservative and often demagogic progressivism that manifested itself in a cavalier attitude toward the Constitution and saw the transformation of the presidency and the birth of the modern administrative state.

With this much latitude, why not include Franklin D. Roosevelt as a conservative for having preserved capitalism?

Certain other judgments Allitt offers raise problems. "The most lasting and conservative achievement of the Federalists—one from which we still benefit today—was their role in creating a strong independent judiciary," he writes, adding that "judicial review, in effect, means judicial supremacy." Most conservatives disagree with the last part of that judgment, and have conflicting views about the first part. And do all or most conservatives agree with Tocqueville's judgment that (as Allitt summarizes it) "the spread of democracy had discouraged the pursuit of statesmanship"? An adequate treatment of this difficulty is beyond the scope of this book, but it is the kind of detail that brings us back around to the complexity of attempting a broad survey of American conservatism.

Allitt gives a good account of interwar conservatism in the 20th century—figures such as Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More, and Albert Jay Nock—though without offering new insights into why this era of conservatism seemed so anemic. The lack of significant contemporaneous intellectual opposition to progressivism and its New Deal successor is one of the important mysteries of American history, and a crucial defect of American conservative thought.



Edmund Burke, Milton Friedman

Like most recent surveys of the right, Allitt's narrative really gets hopping in the postwar years, with the emergence of free-market intellectuals such as Hayek, von Mises, and Friedman, and the sensational arrival of William F. Buckley Jr. and *National Review*. Allitt also gives a nod to a few important conservative activists and activist organizations such as Phyllis Schlafly and the Young Americans for Freedom, and notes the centrality of the *Roe* v. *Wade* decision to the shape of modern American politics.

Of course, any narrative account of the contemporary conservative scene runs up against the problem of becoming like a Russian novel, with too many characters and subplots to keep straight. Allitt does as good a job as can be done in a book of this scope, giving generally fair and adequate treatments of the paleocons, neocons, libertarians, and the religious right.

There are some curious omissions, however: Leo Strauss and his circle get barely a mention (with the sole exception of Allan Bloom), while George Will gets two pages. While *The Public Interest* and *Triumph* receive worthy discussion, along with libertarian figures such as Ayn Rand and Murray Rothbard, there is no mention of *Reason*, the preeminent libertarian publication for many years. Possibly these and other figures and themes worthy of inclusion ended up on the cutting room floor for reasons of length, but it leaves the account less than fully complete.

Not until the very last page does Allitt confront the central issue of American conservatism: Is it, as Louis Hartz's famous thesis in *The Liberal Tradition in America* implied, merely a branch of liberalism, or something distinct and antithetical to liberalism? Allitt suggests the latter, writing that "it would be perverse [today] to voice an argument like Hartz's." But this question gets at the very heart of the fractiousness of the right, and it is by no means clear that even the main currents of conservatism represent a fundamental rejection of (or alternative to) liberalism rightly understood.

Allitt shouldn't be faulted too much for punting on this issue, or giving it perfunctory treatment. The fault lines between pro-market classical liberals and champions of commu-

LEFT: NEWSCOM, RIGHT: AP PHOTOS

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nity, tradition, and authority mimic, in some ways, the clash between reason and revelation that was such an important part of the story of Europe for nearly two millennia. This story now plays out in America in a new form, mostly on the right, and is just as hard to resolve or synthesize as it was at the time of Thomas Aquinas.

Patrick Allitt's inclusive history is a solid and worthy contribution to the growing literature about conservatism, but it will still leave many observers scratching their heads trying to make sense of this many-sided force in our political and intellectual life. ♦

Fighting Quaker

Would independence have been won without Nathanael Greene? **BY EDWARD ACHORN**

He is, in many ways, the classic American male: a hard-driving businessman making it on his own, providing for a family, determined to do something great for the country he loves.

When his world explodes into war, he becomes a leader, achieving greatness that might have seemed unimaginable in a less innovative, more highly structured society. With the qualities of guts, a knack for unconventional thinking, and sheer hard work, he takes on the brave, sophisticated specialists who are leading the best-trained, best-equipped army in the world, and beats them at their own game, saving the cause of freedom for his posterity—all of us—to enjoy.

Rise and Fight Again
The Life of Nathanael Greene
by Spencer C. Tucker
ISI, 275 pp., $25

His name was Nathanael Greene, and he was the most important general of the Revolutionary War, aside from one George Washington. Until recently, he has been a remarkably overlooked founding father: One strike against him, he hailed from pipsqueak Rhode Island—the aristocrats from big, rich Virginia always seemed to win the historical laurels—and he died not long after the war, at only 43, before he could play any role in shaping the government of the new nation. Thus, he has been relegated to a footnote in our founding.

But in recent years, a reappraisal has been underway. Greene emerges as a compelling figure in David McCullough's bestselling *1776*, and journalists Gerald M. Carbone and Terry Golway have contributed well-received, full-scale biographies. Now, the noted military and naval historian Spencer C. Tucker offers us a quick march of 275 pages. The title is drawn from Greene's most famous statement: "We fight, get beat, rise and fight again." It was that very quality of stubbornness, that refusal to quit, that characterized the American cause and secured independence.

As Tucker notes, Greene seemed an "unlikely candidate for a military career, let alone distinction as a brilliant strategist." He came from a "decidedly unmilitary Quaker background," was essentially untrained in military strategy, suffered from a slight limp, and was subject to severe bouts of asthma. He was the son of a strict, pious father who frowned on his love of dancing and books.

"Early very early when I should have been in the pursuit of Knowledge, I was digging into the Bowels of the Earth after Wealth. . . . His mind was over shadow'd with prejudices against Literary Accomplishments," Greene recalled rather bitterly.

Yet his wealth helped him secure status as a rising leader in the colony and an eight-room house, including a library that he filled with books. As part of his self-education, he delved into military works, among them Caesar's narratives of his campaigns, writings by Frederick the Great and the memoirs of Marshal Maurice de Saxe.

Portrait of Greene by Charles Willson Peale

As a businessman, he well understood the growing threat posed by a distant, intrusive, and unaccountable govern-

Edward Achorn, deputy editor of the editorial pages at the Providence Journal, *is the author of a forthcoming biography of the baseball pitcher Old Hoss Radbourn (Smithsonian Books).*

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ment, and he embraced the radical anti-tax, pro-freedom ideas then circulating in Rhode Island.

He helped organize a local militia and, when war broke out, was passed over for an officer's post (because of his limp). He willingly assumed the role of private. Yet his ambition, talent, and popularity with Rhode Island forces were soon apparent, and he rose to the rank of brigadier general.

He played a major role from then on: holding Boston after the British retreat; commanding forces on Long Island; urging retreat from New York and the burning of the city; commanding a column at the Battle of Trenton; accepting the role of quartermaster general at Valley Forge, doing a brilliant job at the less-than-glorious task of supplying the troops; and finally, commanding forces in the South, using a tactically brilliant combination of attack and retreat to wear down the British.

Tucker admirably fleshes out Greene's character in a few pages with deft detail and the man's own pungent, memorable statements. The general emerges as a courageous leader who thrust himself into battle, a tireless worker who toiled long into the night, a man in love with his wife but with an eye for the ladies, devoted to General Washington but jealous of military glory, sympathetic to his suffering troops but ready to hang deserters, pugnacious but restrained, always casting a pragmatic eye on the ultimate goal.

Military buffs will enjoy Tucker's detailed description of battles and the tactics Greene employed to survive them. The writing is not flawless—there are prosaic, hackneyed patches ("London now adopted a hard line," the king's policies "created a firestorm in America")—and the maps are, in many cases, all but useless, with tiny, fuzzy, unreadable type, reflecting an apparent failure to secure images of sufficient resolution and run them big enough to be helpful.

But *Rise and Fight Again* is an admirably brisk and informative biography of a great and wonderfully American figure. ♦

Darkness Visible

Stories that plumb the depths below the surface.

BY ANDREW PALMER

The best stories in this debut collection are told—with great warmth, expansiveness, and humor—by men, and they luxuriate in a sort of man-talk that Wells Tower refers to more than once as *jawing*.

Everything Ravaged, Everything Burned
Stories
by Wells Tower
Farrar, Straus, and Giroux
256 pp., $24

Pungent, playful, crass, good-natured, jawing is above all a code, a way of speaking that aims to establish a rapport and set all parties at ease. The narrator of "Retreat" says of a friend: "He could laugh and drink and murder whole evenings rambling about chain saws, women, and maintaining equipment, and do so in such a way that you never felt there was anything more in the world to think about than these things."

Of course, there is much more in the world to think about than these things, and it's the intrusion of certain less anodyne subjects into their characters' imperfectly circumscribed comfort zones that sets off explosions in these stories, often in the form of brutal violence. But by that point we have already been thoroughly seduced. Tower's stories don't ramble—their action, in fact, sometimes feels too neatly orchestrated—but they roll along in a friendly and accommodating way, in sure-footed and sonorous prose, and they confide in the reader quite frankly.

"Bob Munroe woke up on his face," begins one. "When Jane left me for Barry Kramer, it was a heavy kind of hurt," begins another. Their protagonists are likeable: charming and good-hearted and flawed in ways that aren't too damning. Their action is of the old-fashioned, tension-building, climax-tending sort. They are, above all, stories that are told *as stories*. This sad and interesting thing happened, they seem to say; let me tell you about it.

Many stories are premised on some sort of escape: The characters are on vacation, or out in the woods, or forced by unkind circumstance to strike off somewhere for awhile. In "Down Through the Valley," which seems to me nearly perfect, Ed, the narrator, agrees to drive the few hours to and from a New Age retreat somewhere in the mountains (the Appalachians, it seems) in order to pick up his young daughter and his ex-wife's new lover, Barry, who has sprained his ankle.

Ed's ex and Barry have gone to the retreat, according to Ed, "to interface with cedar trees and experience cosmic episodes"—just the sort of flimsy nonactivity that releases deep currents of resentment in many of Tower's characters. Predictably, Ed and Barry chafe against each other the moment they get in the car. Barry accidentally tears a patch of vinyl from Ed's car seat with his crutch, and then, in a beautifully incriminating moment, he "looked at [Ed] to see if [he'd] seen it, then gave a guilty wince."

The tension builds as the trio make their way home, and is finally given its due release in a horrific and pitiful scene that has Ed disfiguring a stranger's face, his own daughter a witness, in the parking lot of a backwoods dive bar. The story ends with Ed, beaten up and supine on the concrete, thinking about his ex-wife. She used to have a recurring dream, Ed remembers, that ended with a predatory man looming over her as she lay in bed:

Andrew Palmer is a writer in New York.

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> Sometimes the dream would infect me, too. I'd wake up screaming along with her, almost seeing that man with us in the room, knowing just a thin second stood between a hammer or a hatchet and the back of my head. She'd get up, cut the lights on, check the closets, under the bed, and I'd get up and do it with her, and not because she asked me to. When we finally got back under the covers, we'd stay up a long while in the dark, half sleeping, hearts going, conscious of all the places in our house where we hadn't thought to look.

Middle-of-the-night dread turns out to be a motif in this collection, recurring most memorably in the title story, whose last sentence is: "But still you wake up late at night and lie there listening for the creak and splash of oars, the clank of steel, the sounds of men rowing toward your home." This is no metaphor: "Everything Ravaged, Everything Burned" abandons the contemporary out-of-the-way America that is the terrain of its predecessors, for Viking-era Scandinavia. It tells the story of a band of marauders who sail off to re-raid an island they'd all but cleaned out less than a year earlier.

If that sounds like remote stuff, it's Tower's strategy to rein in the subject matter by deploying the same sort of man-talk lyricism, amped up a bit here to jazzy new heights, that characterizes the rest of his stories. Reminiscent of John Barth's snappy reworkings of classical myths, the result is both familiar and defamiliarizing: "My buddy Gnut, who lived just over the stony moraine our wheat field backed up on, came down the hill one day. . . . Like me, he wasn't big on warrioring. He was just crazy for boat. He'd have rowed from his shack to his shithouse if somebody would invent a ship whose prow could cut sod."

It doesn't take long before the initial disconnect between language and subject matter fades into the background, occasionally called back to the surface to make us laugh, and it's to Tower's great credit that the characters in this story are just as fully drawn as any of the others in less exotic locales, and the feelings just as potent. His themes, too, are no different here than in his other stories: the vulnerabilities exposed by love, the comfort of friends, the healing power of nature, and, especially, the constant unlocatable *menace* that lurks beneath his characters' lives.

This menace—a vague threat of violence, a premonition of loss—is palpable in every one of these nine stories, and its presence is largely what elevates this volume to something more than a collection of well-told, affecting anecdotes. Curious, then, that the two stories that feel most saturated by it, "Leopard" and "On the Show," are the least successful. "Leopard" is told in the second-person imperative and "On the Show" in a roving third-person omniscient, and there is something about the literariness of these conceits that, by comparison to the first-person and close third-person of the other stories, feels affected and silly:

> Good morning. You have not slept well.

And:

> Now it's dark. The sun has slipped behind the orange groves, disclosing the garbled rainbow of the carnival rides.

Grim-faced, they announce their seriousness from the first sentences.

Tower is at his best when he grants his stories a brighter voice. The darkness of his vision—like Flannery O'Connor's, Lorrie Moore's, and John Cheever's—is made both more palatable and more terrifying by the lightness of his prose and the humor of his characters. If his impulse is sometimes too much toward the joke, his jokes are more often than not unnerving and unredemptive: "She was molten in my bed, but she also suffered depressions that were very dear to her. She would often call just to sigh at me for two hours on the phone, wanting me to applaud her depth of feeling. I cut it off, then missed her, wishing that I'd at least had the sense to take her naked photograph."

That passage rings both of honest truth-telling and of cruel dismissiveness, and it hints at a loneliness that is the lingering condition of even the least damaged of these characters. Even as it makes us smile, it holds more than a whiff of desperation. ♦

Global Warning

The horror at the heart of Al Gore's utopia.

BY JON L. BREEN

Two categories of readers may be tempted early in the going to lay aside—or, if of a more volatile temperament, throw across the room—Matthew Glass's first novel. But bailing out could be a mistake.

Ultimatum
by Matthew Glass
Atlantic Monthly,
400 pp., $24

The first group are those who don't believe global warming exists, or if it does, that human behavior neither has caused it nor can reduce its effects. The basic premise of *Ultimatum* is that Al Gore's warnings are way too optimistic. By 2032, as Arizona senator Joe Benton prepares to take office as president, the effects of climate change are increasing exponentially, facing the United States and the world with imminent catastrophe if a workable agreement can't be reached for planet-wide reduction of carbon emissions.

That these cataclysmic effects are real and caused by human activity is regarded as settled. But even skeptics on global warming may find the premise of the novel worthy of exploration: If such

Jon L. Breen is the author, most recently, of Probable Claus.

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a calamity were to occur, how would it be handled politically and practically?

The second group of potential book-hurlers are those who expect even blockbuster thrillers to exhibit some measure of literary style. Fine prose, deep characterization, and sparkling dialogue are considered superfluous by too many readers, writers, and even reviewers of the contemporary thriller. The late Michael Crichton's technological melodramas were sometimes unfairly criticized for undistinguished style. But next to Glass, Crichton was a veritable F. Scott Fitzgerald. The most vivid character in the early pages of *Ultimatum* is Benton's outspoken secretary of state Larry Olsen, not because he emerges as a three-dimensional personality but because his role in the story is to offer contrarian advice.

Benton himself is the flattest cardboard—his lackluster acceptance speech demands that we take his enormous charisma on faith—and the reader's identification with him by the end of the book is based more on the nature and seriousness of his problems than any real human connection. Glass stakes all on the nonfictional hook and the exploration of the issues involved.

Surprisingly, that was enough for me. By around page 100, this novel had me hooked. Do the writing and dialogue really get sharper as the book goes along, or does it merely seem so because the plot has become so engaging?

In what could be termed a futuristic diplomatic thriller, or presidential procedural, the country and the world are largely unchanged in 20-plus years, aside from the central situation. More women occupy key positions; Benton's vice president is female, as was one of his White House predecessors. There was another 9/11 attack in 2015. The two Koreas are apparently united, but an independent Taiwan continues to rankle mainland China. Great Britain is still America's closest ally.

Benton has won election in a landslide, unpopular incumbent Mike Gartner having been relegated to one term as a result of unilateralism, unpopular military ventures, and perceived favoring of the rich. Relocation (with a capital R) is already a major political issue, one of the four key aspects of Benton's New Foundation, along with health, education, and jobs. There have been extreme floods on the Gulf Coast, and Benton notes, "Every country with a coastline accepts that millions of people are going to have to be moved."

But as Benton prepares to take office and introduce his ambitious program of domestic reforms, Gartner drops a bombshell in a secret meeting with his successor: New scientific models conclusively show things are even worse than believed. A whole series of Kyoto accords have given lip service to solving the problem of carbon emissions but have been almost universally ignored in practice. The question facing the Benton administration: Should they go ahead with another Kyoto charade or try to reach agreement one-on-one with the other major world power, the still nominally Communist China?

Ultimatum has its rewards for political and international relations wonks of all ideological stripes. The story unfolds in the corridors of power, proceeding from one meeting to another, usually in the United States, sometimes in China. Issues are laid out and explored from all angles. Notably missing are "common folk" interludes, contrived cinematic action set-pieces, and tangential personal complications. If some regret this, others will be glad that Glass sticks to the issues at hand. Even Benton's family exchanges—his politically obsessed daughter is one of the more engaging characters—bear on the central problem. His generational clashes with his son are neither resolved nor even revisited.

The main focus is how the United States can reach an agreement to save the world with China, not an easy task. A China analyst tells Benton, "There is no Chinese government, there's only the party. There is no party, there are only factions. Sometimes there aren't even factions, but only individuals." A Chinese-American State Department employee notes that while Benton and other presidents, in addressing major international issues, "think of something outside your own narrow partisan agenda," Chinese leaders consider only what will keep them in power, and consider their own situations more important than the good of their people.

America's allies object to Benton's decision to deal directly with the Chinese, and a principal issue is when, if ever, unilateralism is an appropriate stance for a president of the United States, or for any world leader. The liberal Benton is taken aback when his own daughter compares him to George W. Bush.

There are occasional humorous touches, though precious few. When the British prime minister takes a private walk around Camp David with the new president, it is the PM who suggests the route: He's been there several times before, and Benton is there for the first time. When the president decides late in the evening that he wants to go to church the next day, his wife points out what organizational problems he's created for some poor Secret Service supervisor and advises him to decide earlier next time.

All that is publicly revealed about first-time novelist Matthew Glass is that he is an Englishman writing under a pseudonym. Like British actors who can channel a note-perfect American accent, many British novelists now write a persuasive American idiom. The only clues I could find to Glass's nationality were his use of "meant to" where an American would say "supposed to," and a very odd attempt at a baseball metaphor: "Do you want to get out in the park, or would you rather stay in the dugout?"

There are other lapses in editing and proofreading. In addition to the surname Benton, we have two characters (one major, one minor) plus a candidate for appointment mentioned in passing with the forename Ben. And how did a sentence like "He almost physically threw up" escape the blue pencil? *Ultimatum* would make a good feature film, or better yet a TV miniseries, where skilled actors and a screenwriter capable of sharp dialogue could breathe life into these somewhat flat characters. But until that happens, readers willing to look past ideological and literary standards will find this print version surprisingly rewarding. ♦

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On Becoming G.K.

The invention of Chesterton was a complicated process.

BY JOHN C. CHALBERG

George Bernard Shaw, Hillaire Belloc, G.K. Chesterton, 1934

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

Somewhere on virtually everyone's list of the 100 most important books of the last century is G.K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*. A "sort of slovenly autobiography" by its author's own reckoning, this thin volume packed a huge wallop when it first appeared in 1908. It still does today, whether it's being read for the first or fifth time.

Now we have a companion volume of sorts in William Oddie's thoroughly disciplined biography of the young Chesterton. It is a biography that challenges what Oddie terms an "academic embargo" against a writer who has been alternately and unfairly dismissed as a right-wing Roman Catholic, raging anti-Semite, fascist sympathizer, loopy dreamer, and bumbling jokester.

Chesterton and the Romance of Orthodoxy
The Making of GKC, 1874-1908
by William Oddie
Oxford, 416 pp., $50

More specifically, it's a story of Chesterton's "mental growth," a story at once powerful and unconventional, because it records the embrace (rather than rejection) of religious dogma. If modern notions of intellectual progress have dwelt on breaking bonds, Chesterton decided to break with modernity instead. But not right away: Since man is "an animal that makes dogmas," he set out to do just that, only to discover truths that had long preceded him.

More than anything else, Chesterton reasoned his way to belief. But he did not do so in a vacuum, as Oddie carefully documents. *Orthodoxy* may well be a timeless book, but it was rooted in a specific time, conceived in a brilliant mind's reaction to that time, and born out of the willingness of the man behind the mind to confront, both in print and in public debate, what he deemed to be the reigning heresies of his day.

While Chesterton would not convert to Roman Catholicism until 1922, it is Oddie's contention that he had arrived at an essentially orthodox Catholic worldview well before *Orthodoxy*.

That he was there at all surely stunned the London literary scene at the time. As Oddie puts it, Chesterton's persona was taken for an act, and his faith was assumed to be "a pose." Each mistake was easy enough to make. Swordstick in hand, slouch hat perched overhead, Chesterton prowled the streets and pubs of London in a flowing cape that did little to hide his 300-pound self. He truly was a show, and not just on the street, but in print as well.

Who is GKC? Along about 1900, London readers began to ask that very question, as reviews, essays, poems, novels, and biographies began to pour forth. One by one, each offered tantalizing hints of the vintage Chesterton, he of the marvelous epigrams, the biting humor, and the curious yet telling use of paradox. But it is Oddie's point that his early writings pointed to what Chesterton himself called the "full horror" of it all, namely the "disgraceful truth that I thought the thing [Christianity] was true."

In its broadest outline, Chesterton's conversion story was quite ordinary. Born into a Victorian family of much affection and minimal belief, he went through a stretch of teenage atheism before dabbling with the late Victorian version of liberal Christianity. It might have ended there had Chesterton's brain actually been the "lump of white fat" that one of his frustrated teachers dismissed it as being, and had the 1890s not been what they were.

Youthful atheist or no, his schoolboy friends remembered him as "looking for God." Such a search was not an easy one to undertake, much less complete, in a turn-of-the-century London given over to secularism, relativism, modernism, skepticism, Impressionism, and hyper-

John C. Chalberg is a writer in Minnesota.

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rationalism. It was, in Oddie's phrase, a time "much more like our own than we imagine." And yet, paradoxically, it was a perfect time for someone of Chesterton's cast of mind.

His starting point was not what he dubbed the "supernormal world" but the material world that seemed to point to the existence of a spiritual world, which in turn seemed to imply a creator. At the same time, those who denied the existence of a creator played an inadvertent role in his thinking as well: As the "isms" of the 1890s began to take hold, Chesterton began to observe that unbelievers were ceasing to believe even in "normal things." Without the supernatural, he concluded, man was left with the "unnatural." To put matters a bit differently, "We are all agnostics until we discover that agnosticism doesn't work." And for G.K. Chesterton, unbelief ultimately failed to work, both as a theological system and as a recipe for daily life.

In the end, Oddie suggests that Chesterton's "real transgression" was not so much believing that Christianity was true but believing that anything could be true. Still, Chesterton did reach the "horror" beyond his "transgression." And once there, he lived a convert's life suspended between two worlds, each of which was entirely real to him. If Oddie is correct, Chesterton's suspended life began as early as 1903. In living that life, the trick was to be at once astonished at this world, and yet at home in it. And to Oddie, this Chestertonian balancing act is one of two such acts that truly matter.

While accepting the miraculous (or what he called the "liberty of God"), Chesterton also found himself balancing between hating the world just enough to want to change it and loving it enough to think it worth changing. Here the key was recovering a sense of childlike innocence which, paradoxically, helped him confront the many faces of evil. As Chesterton understood it, Christ's call to become "as a little child" was not a call to withdraw from the world but a demand that we confront life's complexities and, yes, life's evils in such a way as to transcend them. ♦

Who Was She?

In search of the aunt who was locked away forever.

BY DIANE SCHARPER

Olivia de Havilland in 'The Snake Pit' (1948)

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

In the 1950s public psychiatric hospitals housed nearly half-a-million patients. By 1980 the number had dropped by 80 percent. Several things had happened: The 1963 Mental Health Act endorsed alternate settings for treating the mentally ill. Activists challenged the process whereby patients could be permanently committed to mental hospitals; others questioned the benefits of asylums and the very concept of mental illness.

Annie's Ghosts
by Steve Luxenberg
Hyperion, 401 pp., $24.99

Annie Cohen, however, was one of many who did *not* benefit from new thinking about psychiatric illness. She had been committed to a Michigan hospital in 1940, and after 32 years of involuntary confinement, died unloved and abandoned. No one—neither her parents nor her older sister Beth—had pressed for her release.

In *Annie's Ghosts* Steve Luxenberg, a *Washington Post* editor, pieces together medical, social, cultural, and family

Diane Scharper, who teaches at Towson University, is the coeditor of Reading Lips and Other Ways to Overcome a Disability.

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history as he wrestles with the tragedy of Annie's life. Ultimately, Luxenberg, Annie's nephew and Beth's son, believes that she and her family were innocent victims of a flawed system, as were thousands of other patients unlucky enough to be committed to an asylum before the advent of modern psychiatric treatment.

Annie Cohen was born in 1919 in Detroit. She had a deformed leg and displaced hip, leaving her unable to walk without crutches. Painfully shy, she was shunned by her schoolmates and even by her sister, two years her senior. Although she was able to read, write, and reason, Annie was slow to learn and was sent to a school for the retarded. Just shy of her 21st birthday she suffered a mental breakdown and was committed to a catch-all institution in Detroit called Eloise.

Like many similar places at that time, Eloise was an asylum where the homeless, mentally ill, and retarded were sent and often forgotten. Although Annie begged her mother to secure her release, she was permanently detained. She was not allowed to testify in court on her own behalf, even though it appears she would have been able to do so.

Making matters worse, Beth lied about Annie's existence. She did pay for Annie's burial in a private Hebrew cemetery and, at one point, had mentioned her sister to a social worker. But no one in the family knew anything definitive about Annie until after Beth died, when a bill for cemetery maintenance exposed the secret that Beth had harbored for 57 years.

When Steven Luxenberg received the bill, he was shocked to discover that his mother had hid her sister's existence from the time of her 1942 marriage until her death in 1999, age 82. How could she do this? Luxenberg attempts to recreate the world that his mother, grandparents, and Annie inhabited as Eastern European Jews living in Detroit in the early 20th century. He also wants to make sense of Beth's actions, since they contradict his memory of her as a devoted mother and caring woman. He reads letters, talks to family members, friends, and neighbors; he interviews physicians, professors, historians, and hospital bureaucrats; he researches health records, hospital histories, scholarly tomes, and newspaper articles. His efforts take him to Detroit, Chicago, New York, Baltimore, Eastern Europe, and the Philippines. And he comes up against mountains of red tape, which require a journalist's persistence, skill, and patience to surmount.

Ultimately, he learns a lot about his family's life during the pogroms in Eastern Europe and the Nazi era. He learns that Annie was scarcely the only person to be institutionalized and abandoned in a Kafkaesque mental health system. But Luxenberg never learns *why* his grandparents and mother abandoned his aunt—which makes *Annie's Ghosts* a disappointment, informative and well-written as it is. Although Luxenberg never gets to the bottom of his family secret, he's able to surmise what probably happened. Annie's parents were poor immigrants who barely spoke English and did not know how to cope with a disabled and troubled daughter. Beth, wanting to escape the stranglehold of poverty and ignorance, was afraid she would be labeled a carrier of defective genes.

So no one mentioned Annie and, gradually, she became a secret, one that Beth hid from friends, children, and (probably) her husband. Luxenberg pulls what he knows of his family's secret out of the closet and examines it in exacting detail. But this is not a memoir so much as a chronicle of a journalist gathering facts. And those facts tell their own haunting story, not about "ghosts" but a girl named Annie, who was absent from her own life. ♦

Bluegrass Fever

Music to accompany despairs of the heart.

BY EDITH ALSTON

The story is acutely intense, and as lean as a three-character play: In a remote area of Kentucky, a young woman leaves her job teaching music at a settlement school to move in with her boyfriend on the tobacco farm where he struggles to bring in his first crop. Alone in the old house overlooking the fields, Aloma spends her days cleaning and teaching herself how to cook, still dreaming of performing Mozart and Debussy, her only company a wall full of family pictures and a dead-toned piano sounding "spoiled like a meat."

All the Living
A Novel
by C.E. Morgan
Farrar, Straus, and Giroux,
208 pp., $23

Edith Alston is an editor and writer in New York.

Her boyfriend Orren, meanwhile, bereaved by the recent deaths of his mother and brother in a terrible road accident, grows increasingly rural. Isolation and festering misunderstanding have led to a brutal act before Orren encourages Aloma to find an outlet for her music at a nearby church. But when her fingers are poised again over well-tuned piano keys, Aloma finds herself drawn to the eloquent minister, named Bell.

Names here are subtly weighted with meaning: "Aloma," as musical and inchoate as the girl it belongs to, is less a name than a sound; "Orren" turns out to be only the workaday moniker obscuring the finer aspirations of

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its owner; and "Bell" has a one-note clarity that may or may not prove ironic. Period matters to the story less than place—trucks travel these hollers, and a heavy black telephone rings in the house (built by Orren's great-great-grandfather) but not cell phones, inside Bell's church, or assorted trucks (and who knows when gratification could last be found working a tobacco farm).

Colloquialisms are dead on—haddy, for instance, not howdy—and cryptically efficient, as colloquialisms tend to be, while an absence of quotation marks compresses the distance between a character's perception and expression to microchip speed:

> He'd said one day, You gonna be my wife or what? and she'd made a joke of it, said, Sure, but don't get too stuck on me—I'm not long for this place. His eyes had danced and then he winked at her and only later it disconcerted her, that wink; it seemed to make a fool of her, or it rendered her a little girl suddenly, all aspiration and no plan. And no will to execute a plan if she had one.

A confession might be due here: A page or two in, and I was viewing this finely etched story with suspicion. Tucked into its rhythms might be a little too much influence of Faulkner, it seemed to me, and an elliptical inwardness that just might turn precious. On the other hand, there was that fresh take on the decrepit piano, and at least one sentence I could only read as musically flawless—"Displaced dust still hung behind the fender of her truck, loath to lie down in boredom again"—while a "sulled" eyebrow (at the sight of that piano) sent me to the dictionary, wondering if that was a longstanding regionalism I was reading, or this author's personal swerve, and whether its meaning should be read as closer to "sullen" or "sullied."

Reader, I read on—and was shortly hooked, not just by the artful confidence in this first-time novelist's idiosyncratic voice, but the arrow-to-the-heart accuracy in the book's vision of a very contemporary couple at that queasy honeymoon stage of sorting past the entanglements of hormonal attraction toward what, in their two carefully guarded selves, is worth surrendering in favor of opening up to.

A student at a nearby agricultural college, Orren was visiting Aloma at her school weekly, his hair slicked down and wearing a clean shirt, until the accident that drove him back onto his debt-threatened acreage. Joining him there, Aloma is virtually without history, raised for some years in a trailer by an aunt and uncle who showed her obligatory decency but no real affection, her parentage never really explored. When the double-wide got too crowded she was sent to the settlement school, where piano lessons were less a source of awakening than a hard solace, overriding the memory of boxed-in hymn chords pounded out by her aunt on Sunday afternoons. With the music resources of the school exhausted, talent earned her private piano lessons and left her hungering for more; but at graduation her options were limited to teaching where she was.

C.E. Morgan

KATRINA FIEBIG

Meanwhile, lack of attachment has given her a fierce eye. Shimmering with the tension of Aloma's emerging awareness over a long hot summer, *All the Living* corners like the packaging symbol for recycling, from keen observation to constricted realization to contradictory thought, a tight-flowing triad of everything between her and Orren that goes unexpressed. Briefly, when she's goaded Orren into dispensing with his barnyard rooster, the awakening bolts into a moment almost comic:

> Orren, my God, she said and then, in a heat, as if it explained something, My God, Orren, I'm a girl. Her words stilted out, sputtering in exasperation. . . . And when she knew she should have stopped she went on: Lord, just think a little bit next time. She heaved a sigh, not knowing how he could live with her and hear the words out of her mouth and lie with her every night. . . .

Triangulating to include the minister, the story both moves out over the broader ground of regional values and religious mores, and seeps deep into the meaning for Aloma of music. As a Kentuckian with a background in music and a master's degree in theological studies from Harvard Divinity School, C.E. Morgan is clearly at home in this emotional and cultural geography. Bell, in his dignity, is an informing figure, ardent in the pulpit and committed to his convictions (but with a domineering mother), and if hard calvings and long-awaited rainstorms over parched fields are stock-in-trade scenes for coming to terms with life on the farm, Aloma's growing understanding of Orren's labors and loss give them an honest measure beyond cliché.

Morgan's language, though, is what matters the most. In the tension between Aloma's need to feel and her ability to see, *All the Living* resonates with the music of a good country fiddle. ♦

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May We Recommend

Four books, each very different from the others, that captured our attention. **BY PHILIP TERZIAN**

First, two volumes intended for the coffee table, well worth examining in detail. ***The West of the Imagination* by William H. Goetzmann and William N. Goetzmann (Oklahoma, 604 pp., $65)**—one William Goetzmann is a distinguished historian of the west at the University of Texas, the other W.G. a professor of finance at the Yale School of Management—is a revision of the initial volume that served as a companion to the PBS series two decades ago. This new, second edition is not just revised but expanded and updated, and about as comprehensive as it is possible to be about an expansive subject.

You could argue that the growth of the American republic has been as much about its westward movement as its internal improvements or constitutional development. And from the curiosities that Lewis and Clark carried back to their patron, Thomas Jefferson, through the luminous paintings of George Catlin and Albert Bierstadt, to the cinema retrospectives of the old frontier, the American imagination has been continually inflamed by the idea of the west. This is not just an extraordinary visual encyclopedia, but a quick and comprehensive introduction to America west of the Mississippi.

By contrast, ***The Beauty of Holiness: Anglicanism & Architecture in Colonial South Carolina* by Louis P. Nelson (North Carolina, 516 pp., $50),** returns us to the 13 colonies with a fascinating, richly illustrated exploration of the history of the Church of England in 17th- and 18th-century South Carolina through church architecture, objects, and artifacts. Unlike Virginia, which was founded as an Anglican preserve, South Carolina had an attitude toward the Established Church that was considerably more complex, and ambivalent, and evolved as Anglicanism was transformed from the time of Charles I through the late Enlightenment.

This is a new volume in the Richard Hampton Jenrette Series in Architecture and the Decorative Arts, and the author, chairman of the architectural history department at the University of Virginia, provides an extraordinary, richly textured, and beautifully illustrated guide to the lost world of pre-independence South Carolina—and the vestiges of rural and urban church habits and practices that still obtain in the contemporary South. You need hardly be an Episcopalian, or connoisseur of the decorative arts, to savor this volume: Any student of American history, or the history of American religion, will consider it essential reading.

The appeal of ***Capybara: A Natural History of the World's Largest Rodent* by Rexford D. Lord (Johns Hopkins, 200 pp., $50)** speaks for itself: It would be difficult to find any casual reader who isn't beguiled by the lore and spectacle of these hundred-pound cousins of the guinea pig who roam the tropical wetlands of South America.

The capybara, looking wise and self-contained as he lurks on the plains or gambols in the water, has been losing numbers and his natural habitat to farming and poaching; but as anyone who has ever observed one at close range can attest, capybaras adapt comfortably and easily to human contact, and play an increasing role, as food and fodder, in the Latin agricultural economy.

This is an old-fashioned book of natural history, a thorough description of the capybara's physiology, behavior, and taxonomy, its appeal to tourists, its status in the food chain, and its varying habits and moods, whether individually or in groups. A capybara, once seen, is not soon forgotten, and there are dozens of delightful photographs to complement the technical data.

John Felstiner is a distinguished professor of English at Stanford, student of Max Beerbohm, modern Jewish literature, poets Paul Celan and Pablo Neruda, and the pioneering academic study of literature and ecology. Now, in ***Can Poetry Save the Earth? A Field Guide to Nature Poems* (Yale, 440 pp., $35),** he has brought together 40 disparate essays—a handful of which first appeared, in slightly different form, in these pages—on poets whose attention to the details of nature, and the relation of man to his physical environment, was especially acute.

Since antiquity, poets have been alive to the natural world, and have always comprehended the spiritual, as well as physical, dimensions of man's surroundings. But as Felstiner explains, we are living in an age of environmental crisis—or perhaps more accurately, environmental consciousness—and it is possible that, while poets are not likely to "save the earth," they certainly awaken us to the earth's delights and, by inference, point us toward responsible stewardship as well.

Felstiner's great gift is not polemical but descriptive: Poets as different as John Clare, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Robinson Jeffers have celebrated their surroundings in their various ways; but with Felstiner's expert guidance, the reader's ear grows more acute, and eye considerably sharper, as the telling details and pertinent wordplay are explained. *Can Poetry Save the Earth?* also features illustrations—from Jeffers's hard Tor House to Yeats's luminous lapis lazuli to Derek Walcott's crashing ocean breakers—that cannot substitute for words but furnish a second dimension to their meaning. This is a remarkable volume that tells us something about poetry, and a lot about the earth—no small achievement. ♦

Philip Terzian is literary editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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I CAN'T BELIEVE I ACTUALLY PULLED IT OFF. YOU SLY DOG. NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO IS FIGURE OUT A WAY TO TELL BARACK ABOUT THE STATE DINNER I JUST PROMISED. AND THE TRIP TO DISNEY WORLD. AND THE MACY'S PARADE AND FIREWORKS SPECTACULAR. AND THE WEEKLONG VEGAS EXTRAVAGANZA. OR WAS IT SEXTRAVAGANZA? AND HIS JUDGING MISS AMERICA. OR WAS IT "DANCING WITH THE STARS"? NOT TO MENTION DINNER WITH SCARLETT JOHANSSON. AND...

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